Chess Canada
2016 Olympiad

#BAKUCHESS

Chess Canada 2016 Olympiad

Chess Canada

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CCN is distributed by email to CFC members who have submitted their email address to the CFC:

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submissions

CCN is looking for contributions: tournament reports, photos, annotated games. For examples, see this issue or read the 2013.06 Appendix for other ideas.

suggestions

If you have an idea for a story *you* would like to write, email me:

cfc_newsletter_editor@chess.ca

- John Upper
editor *Chess Canada*

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Cover: Crystal Palace

Baku's Crystal Palace is lit up in the Stars and Stripes after the USA wins its first Men's Olympiad in decades.

photo: **Paul Truong**

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- **140 pages: the biggest issue of *Chess Canada* ever!**
- **100% Baku Chess Olympiad**
- ***Featuring:***
  - **Victor Plotkin's detailed Captain's report**
  - **Aris Marghetis's colourful behind-the-scenes report**
  - **annotations from Bareev, Hansen, Le Siège, Krnan, Yuan and Zhou**
  - **45 annotated games**
  - **94 photos**
  - **318 diagrams**
  - **PGN with all annotations+3**

- **chapter titles** on the left are **clickable**, as are **page numbers** (which return to this page)
- **some photos are clickable**, including the interviews; and the one below, which takes you to the wonderful opening ceremony from Baku's 2015 European Games. Why is it called the "Land of Fire"? Click and watch.

Critical Positions

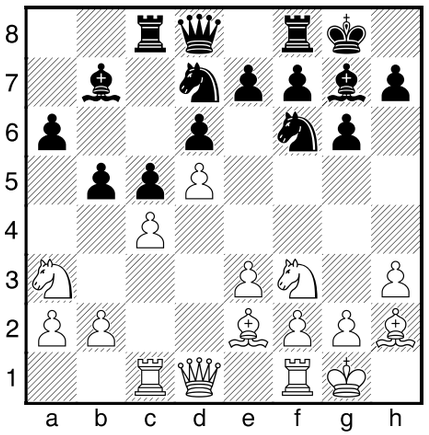
The following diagrams are critical positions from this issue of *Chess Canada*. You can treat them as exercises or as a teaser introduction to what you'll find this month.

These "critical positions" can be:

- winning combinations
- surprising tactics
- endgames requiring precise play
- simple calculation exercises
- variation-rich middlegames
- moments when one player went badly wrong.

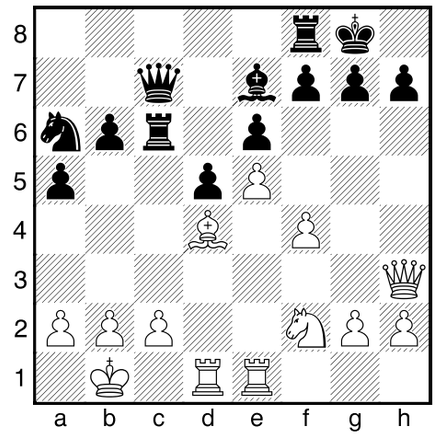
The ■ and □ squares next to each diagram indicate the player to move.

Solutions appear in the game analysis in this month's *CCN*, ***in the red diagrams*** in the reports named under the diagram. Critical postions usually feature significantly more analytical commentary than the rest of the game.



□

see: Men's Team



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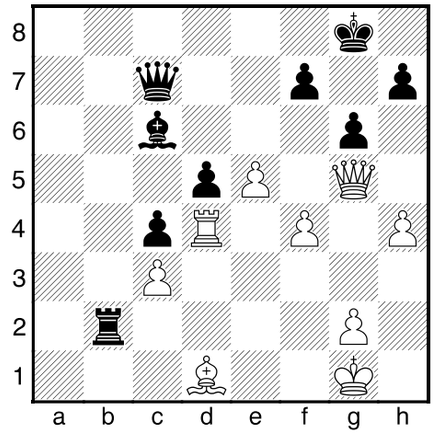
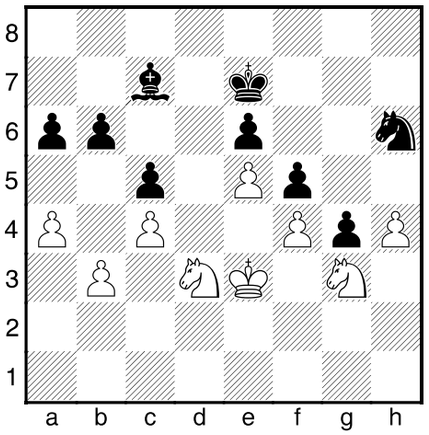


■

What should Black play:...♕a5, ...♖b8, or ...♗d7.

see: Men's Team



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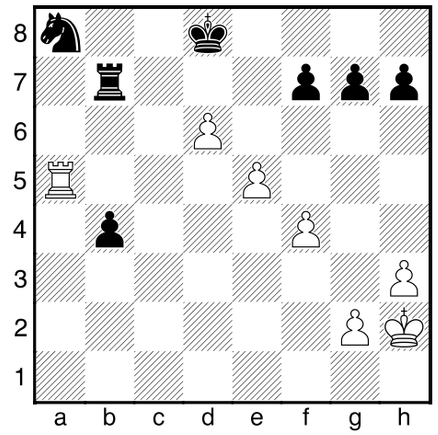
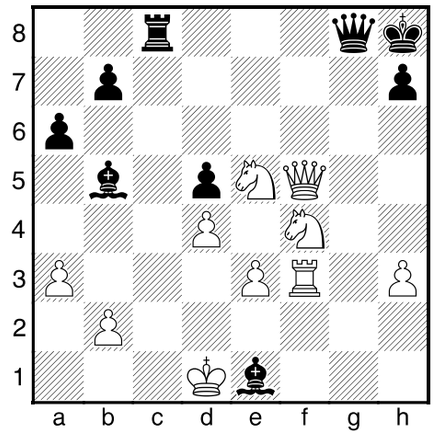


■

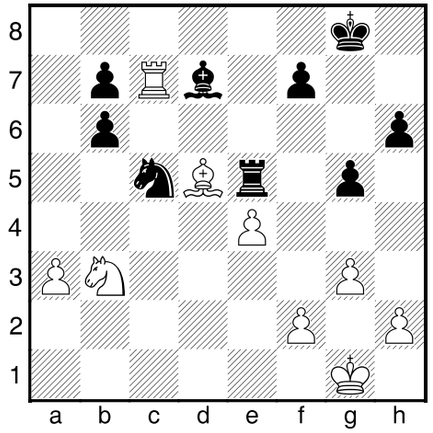
see: Men's Team



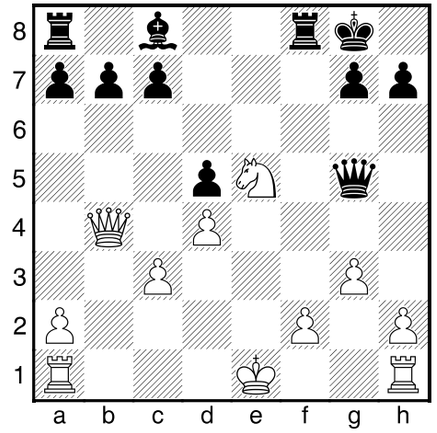
■

What happens after ...♗a4+.

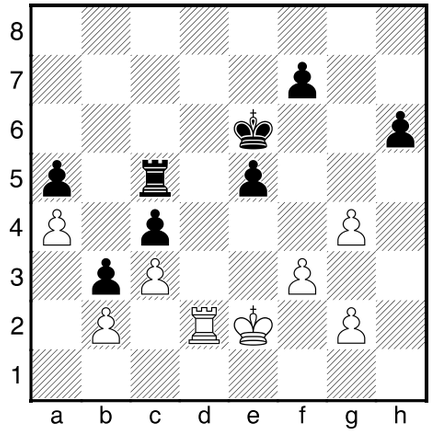
see: Men's Team



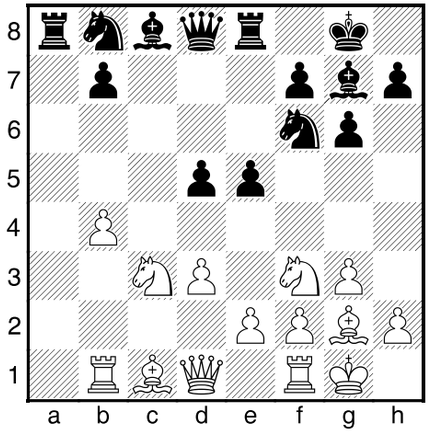
see: Men's Team



see: Women's Team

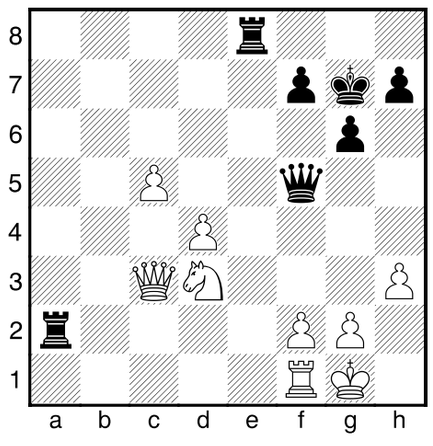


see: Women's Team

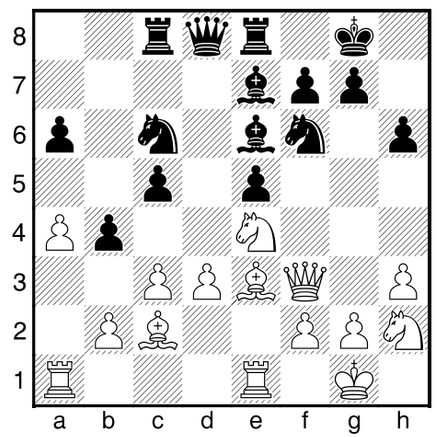


see: Women's Team

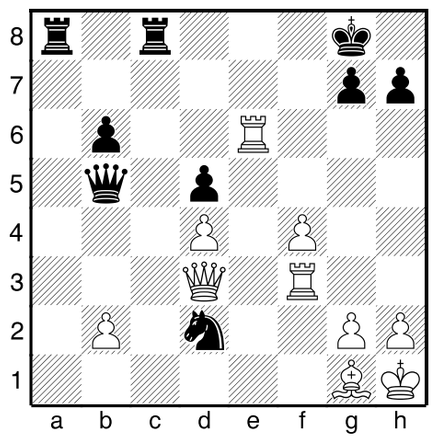
After 13.♗g5 ♗e6, should White capture on e5?



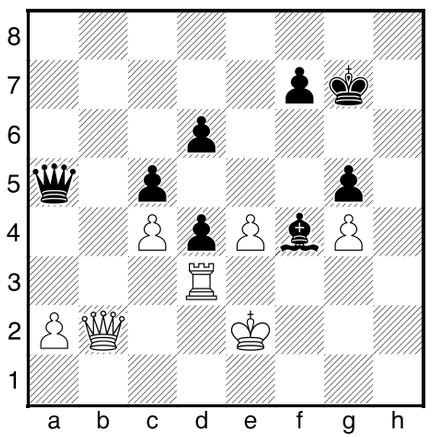
see: Men's Team



see: Women's Team

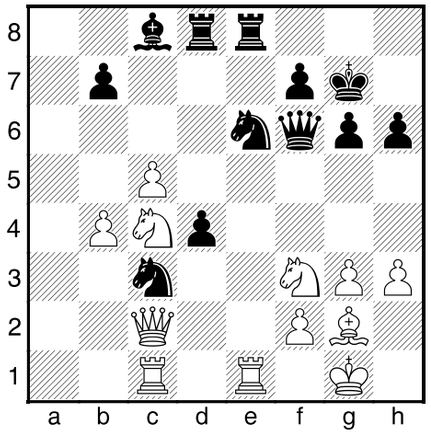


see: Women's Team



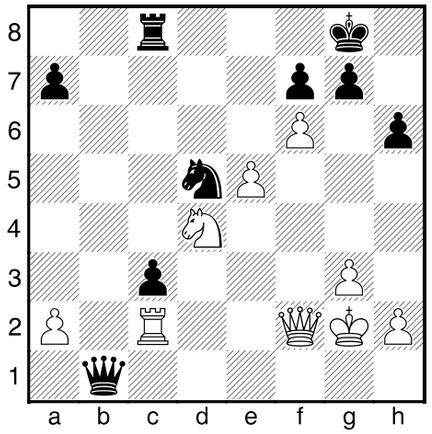
White has four isolated pawns, but Black can attack them only with her ♕.

see: Women's Team



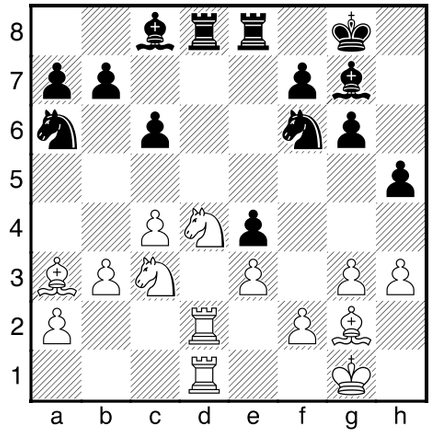
Black has a strong but very hard to see combo.

see: Women's Team



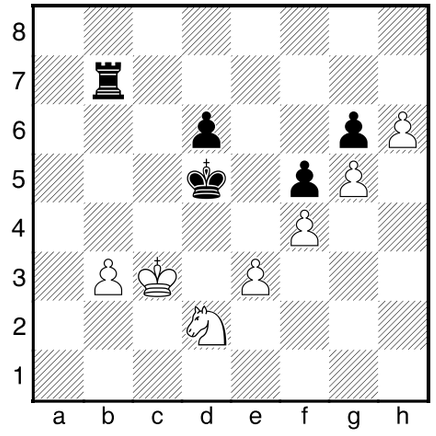
What's better: ...♖c4 or ...♘b4.

see: Women's Team



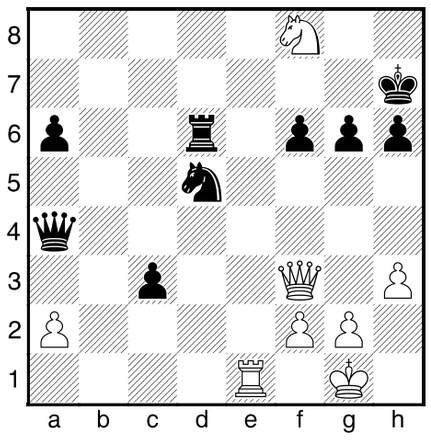
White's pieces are as well placed as they're going to get, but how can he turn that into something when Black is so solid?

see: Around the Hall



What happens after 52...♖c7+ 53.♘c4?.

see: Around the Hall



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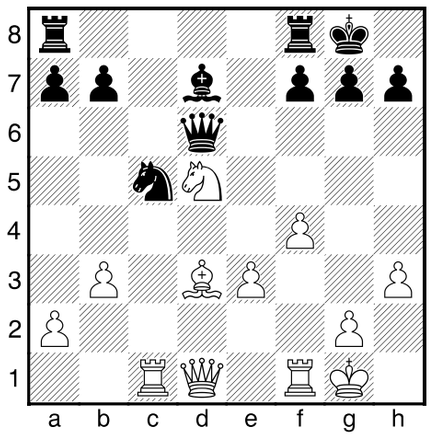

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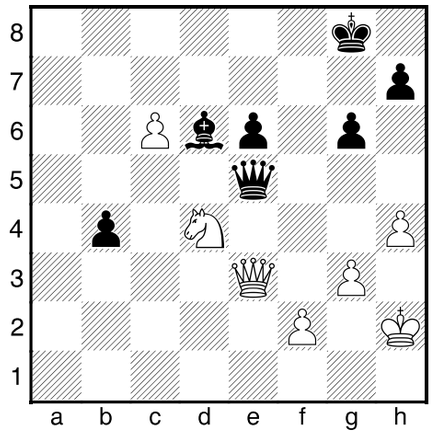
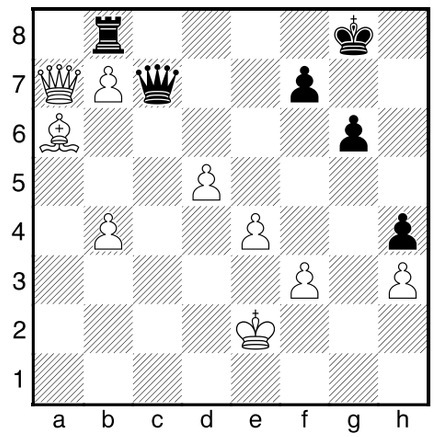


Black has just pushed her passed pawn with ...b4.

see: Around the Hall



The gold medal is on the line (sort of)

see: Around the Hall

Baku: the least you should know

by **the editor**

Baku, Azerbaijan

- "Land of Fire" named for natural gas that seeps and burns.
- oil-rich capital on Caspian Sea.
- Kasparov's home town, but he's now a local semi-pariah.

42nd Olympiad

- Sept. 1-13, 2016
- 11 round Swiss:
  - 170 teams in the Open
  - 134 teams in the Women's
- TC: 40/90 +G/30 + 30s
- not enough to complain about!

Top Teams

1. **USA** first non-boycotted Olympiad win since 1937.
2. Ukraine (behind USA on TB)
3. Russia
4. India (TB)
5. Norway (TB)

1. **China** Defeated Russia in the last round to win the Women's Olympiad for the first time.
2. Poland, with the better TB than
3. Ukraine
4. Russia (TB)
5. India (TB)

Canadian Men: 11th

GM Evgeny Bareev	(+3 =3 -4)
GM Anton Kovalyov	(+6 =4 -0)
GM Alex Le Siège	(+4 =1 -3)
GM Eric Hansen	(+8 =2 -1)
IM Tomas Krnan	(+4 =1 -0)

Captain: **FM Victor Plotkin**

Ranked 25th Finished: =11-23rd

Canadian Women: 39th

FM Qiyu Zhou	(+3 =3 -4)
WIM Yuanling Yuan	(+7 =3 -0)
WFM Alexandra Botez	(+2 =2 -4)
Lali Agbabishvili	(+4 =3 -2)
Maili-Jade Ouellet	(+5 =0 -2)

Captain: **IM Aman Hambleton**

Ranked 40th Finished: =30-42nd

10 Notable Facts

1. **Canadian Men: Board 1 in final round** (11th on TB).
2. **Anton Kovalyov**: Silver medal on board 2.
3. **Yuanling Yuan**: best % score on board 2.
4. **Eugenio Torre**, 64-year-old Philippine GM, crushed his 23rd Olympiad: played every round, scored +9 =2 -0, TPR of 2813, board 3 bronze medal.
5. **Armenia** did not play, citing player security due to a political disupte with Azerbaijan.
6. **Anand** did not play, once again leaving India (4th) without its strongest player.
7. **Ivanchuk** did not play: the #33-ranked player in the world opted for a *checkers* tournament instead of playing for Ukraine (2nd on TB).
8. **Judit Polgar** was Captain of Hungary's Open Team.
9. **Swedish Family-Team** GM Juan Bellon Lopez was Captain of the Swedish Women's team, his wife Pia Cramling was board 1 and daughter Anna was board 5.
10. **Phil Haley** — organizer, player, International Arbiter, Olympiad official — was made a FIDE Honorary Member, joining long-time contributors as Max Euwe, Victor Kortchnoi, Arpad Elo, and John Prentice.

Bd.	Title	Name	Rtg	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Pts.	Games	Rp	rtg+/-
1	GM	Bareev Evgeny	2675	1		0	1	0	½	1	½	½	0	0	4.5	10	2597	-8.9
2	GM	Kovalyov Anton	2617		1	1	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	8.0	10	2852	29.8
3	GM	Le Siège Alexandre	2512	1	1	0		1		0	½		1	0	4.5	8	2585	8.8
4	GM	Hansen Eric	2582	1	1	½	1	1	1	0	½	1	1	1	9.0	11	2738	21.9
5	IM	Krnan Tomas	2430	1	1		1		½			1			4.5	5	2634	11.4

Bd.	Title	Name	Rtg	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Pts.	Games	Rp	rtg+/-
1	FM	Zhou Qiyu	2367	1	0	½	½	0	0		0	½	1	1	4.5	10	2114	-60.0
2	WIM	Yuan Yuanling	2205	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	½	1		8.5	10	2355	38.4
3	WFM	Botez Alexandra	2092		0	½		0	½	0		0	1	1	3.0	8	1881	-41.2
4		Agbabishvili Lali	2064	1	½		½	1	1	½	0	0		1	5.5	9	2083	7.0
5	WCM	Ouellet Maili-Jade	1992	1		1	0			1	0		1	1	5.0	7	1996	11.6

Best Canadian Olympiad?

Was 2016 the best Canadian Olympiad result ever?

This article looks at four ways to consider the question: final rank, game score %, match score %, and performance rating.

Final Rank

In 2016, the Canadian Men finished 11th. Canada has finished 11th or higher at four other Olympiads: 8th in 1976, 9th in 1980, 11th in 1970 and 1978.

8th Haifa 1976

Canada's highest-ever finish was 8th in 1976 in Haifa Israel; scoring 32/56 game points, only 1 point out of 4th overall.

But the Soviet bloc boycotted that Olympiad, which had only 48 teams, down from 75 in the previous Olympiad. It's not only the numbers but the quality of the teams that was down. To give an idea of what difference it made: if the same countries had also boycotted the 1978 Olympiad, then teams from Hungary (1st), the Soviet Union (2nd), Romania (6th), and Poland (8th) would not have attended; and instead of finishing 11th, the vacuum would have pulled the Canadian team up to 7th. The USA won in 1976, but even most American commentators put an asterisk next to that one.

Conclusion: big fish, small pond.

9th Malta 1980

Canada finished 9th out of 81 at the 1980 La Valetta Olympiad in Malta.

Final standings were based on game score and Canada scored 32 game points; that compares to 39 for top teams from the Soviet Union and Hungary, but only 3 points behind bronze medalists USA, with 35 points.

That is less impressive than it sounds once you see how they did it: *Canada did not play any of the top 7 teams*, and it *won only one match against a team that finished in the top 25* (Argentina, 2½-1½ in the 14th round). Canada was held to draws by #51 Scotland, and by #31 Switzerland and #32 Colombia.

Conclusion: rank flatters results.

11th Siegen 1970

Canada finished 11th, but the fomat was very different from today.

In 1970 it was a two-stage round robin: the first stage were 10 team RRs to qualify for one of the five group round robin finals. Only teams that finished in the top 2 in their preliminary RR would play with the top teams for the medals. Canada qualified for the top group by finished second to Yugoslavia in their preliminary group — partly on the strength of a 3-1 win over England, which was still years from becoming a chess power.

Canada then finished second-last in the A-group final, a 12-team Round Robin. Canada managed to draw the USA (Fischer sat out that round) but won only two matches, both by the minimum 2½-1½ score, and those were against other bottom-dwellers.

Conclusion: Good preliminary, but a poor final against contenders.

11th Buenos Aires 1978

Canada scored 32 game points to finish in a tie for 7th-11th and 11th on tie-break in 1978. That was only 3 points out of the bronze medal position, and only 1 point out of 4th.

Canada played six of the top eight teams: #2 Soviet Union (1-3), #3 USA (1-3); #5 Israel (1½-2½); #6 Romania (2½-1½); #7 Denmark (½-3½); #8 Poland (2-2). That's 3/12 match points and 8½/24 (35.4%) game points. Against top-9 teams the 2016 team scored 0/6 match points, 4½/12 (37.5%) game points.

In 1978, Peter Biyiasas won the **silver medal on board 2**, and Lawrence Day and Leon Piasetski were 5th best on boards 3 and 4.

Conclusion: comparable to 2016.

Game Score %

The **2016** game score of **69.3%** (+25 = 11 -8) is slightly higher than the previous best of 68.2% (+24 =12 -8) from 2008, the only two times Canada has scored more than 60% in a non-B group final.

Conclusion: 2016 best by a hair.

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Match Point %

Olympiads have been run with varying numbers of matches, ranging from 22, to the most common 14, to the current 11; so the only sensible way to compare them is by percentages.

In **2016**, Canada's match score was **15/22 = 68.18%**.

That is behind only the 73.8% from the B-group final in 1972. Clearly, a B-final % is not comparable to the current Open format where no team can avoid the best opponents.

The 1990 and 2008 teams scored only slightly worse than the 2016 team — 64% and 63% — so-let's look at them.

1990 Novi Sad

Canada finished 30th out of 108 teams, with 31/56 game points (8 points behind the winners and 4½ points off the podium). Their 18/28 = **64.29%** match score was only slightly worse than the 2016 team's match score %.

But again, a closer look shows this was not nearly as impressive a performance: in 1990 Canada won only 1 match against a top 40 team (Israel, 2½-1½ in round 3), and were demolished 0-4 by Colombia and 0½-3½ by Sweden, with only Nickoloff preventing a white wash.

2008 Dresden

A closer comparison is with the 2008 team, which scored 14/22 = **63.63%** match points.

That 2008 team finished =18-28th, but was 28th (last in their score group) on tie-break. That poor tie-break is because *in 2008 Canada played only one team among the top 40* finishers (#18 India, losing 2½-1½ in the first round). Worse, Canada lost to 85th finisher Iraq, and only drew with #106 Yemen. So although the match score % was close to the 2016 team, the 2008 result looks much worse.

2016 Baku

In 2016, Canada won three matches against teams finishing in the top 25, and lost only three matches, each one to a top-10 team, and each by the minimum 1½-2½ score: gold medalists (USA), silver medalists (Ukraine), and #9 (England).

Conclusion: 2016 was best result in terms of match % and results.

Performance Rating

The table of individual results on the next page tells you all you need to know: ***all five members of the 2016 Canadian Olympiad team had performances among the best 15 ever***, including the best (Kovalyov) and the second best (Hansen).

To put it another way: *the the worst TPR on the 2016 team would have been the 9th best in Canadian history*... if it hadn't been for the excellent results of his other four teammates! As it is, Alex's TPR is "only" the 13th best in Canadian history.

Conclusion: *by far* the best TPR.

Conclusion

By almost every metric the 2016 Olympiad Team had the best results ever, but the 1978 team is comparable: they played a more difficult set of opponents, but scored slightly worse. Both teams won silver medals on board 2.

Link

http://www.olimpbase.org/teams/can_tea.html

Strategy
GAMES AND ACCESSORIES

Best Individual Results

	Highest TPR	Men	Olympiad	Board
1	**2852**	**Anton Kovalyov**	**2016**	**2**
2	**2738**	**Eric Hansen**	**2016**	**4**
3	2682	Kevin Spraggett	2000	2
4	2670	Anton Kovalyov	2014	1
5	2646	Eric Hansen	2012	4
6	2638	Mark Bluvshtein	2004	3
7	**2634**	**Tomas Krnan**	**2016**	**5**
8	2614	Yan Teplitsky	2002	4
9	2607	Peter Biyiasas	1976	1
10	**2597**	**Evgeny Bareev**	**2016**	**1**
11	2588	Thomas Roussel-Roozmon	2010	2
12	2587	Eric Hansen	2014	2
13	**2585**	**Alexandre Le Siège**	**2016**	**3**
14	2583	Jean Hébert	1982	3
15	2576	Mark Bluvshtein	2010	1

	Highest TPR	Women	Olympiad	Board
1	**2355**	**Yuanling Yuan**	**2016**	**2**
2	2328	Nava Starr	1994	1
3	2284	Yuanling Yuan	2014	1
4	2271	Yuanling Yuan	2010	1
5	2236	Nava Starr	2002	1
6	2234	Manon Léger	1996	3
7	2230	Nava Starr	1992	1
8	2216	Céline Roos	1988	2
9	2211	Nava Starr	1976	2
10	2192	Dina Kagramanov	2002	2

Gold

1984 **Celine Roos** Board 2
1976 **Nava Starr** Board 2
1958 **Frank Anderson*** Board 2
1954 **Frank Anderson*** Board 2
1939 **Daniel Yanofsky*** Board 2

Silver

2016 **Anton Kovalyov** Board 2
2000 **Kevin Spraggett** Board 2
1978 **Peter Biyiasas** Board 2

***You'd think this would be simple, *but*...**

- early Olympiads did not award medals.
- later, medals went only to players in the A-Group Final.
- medals have been awarded for points and (today's standard) best Elo TPR.
- here, * = best %, but not A-Finalist.

Bronze

1990 **Deen Hergott** Reserve
1986 **Lawrence Day** Board 3
1982 **Nava Starr** Board 1
1982 **Jean Hébert** Board 2
1976 **Peter Biyiasas** Board 1
1976 **Smilja Vujosevic** Board 1
1972 **Peter Biyiasas*** Board 4

Men's Team

by FM Victor Plotkin+

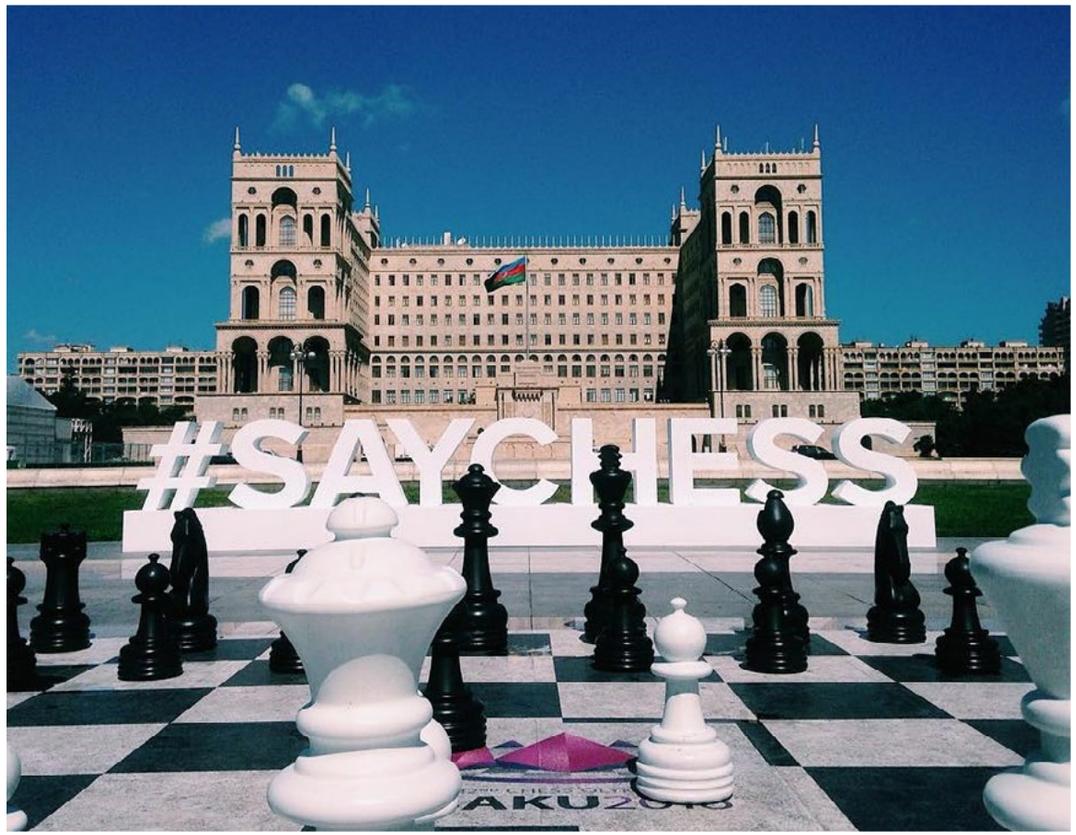
It is not easy to write about such a successful event, probably the best one I have ever participated as a player or as a captain. I will try to express my personal thoughts and opinions in chronological order, before and during the Olympiad.

Baku

Somewhere during my first Olympiad in 2012 in Istanbul, we got informed that Baku was selected to host the tournament in 2016. I remember that I thought it would be extremely unlikely to serve as a captain 3 consecutive times. I was not sure if I really wanted it or needed it.

I was in Azerbaijan only once before, in 1982, also for a chess tournament. That time Azerbaijan was a part of the Soviet Union. The traditional "White Rook" school tournament was organized in a small town 300 km from Baku. With 18 teams — one from each republic, an extra team from Russia and separate teams from Moscow and Leningrad — our school from Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) finished 2nd, which counted as a big accomplishment at the time. Luck is always in my favour when I am in Azerbaijan.

Upon reflection, I remembered that the organization of that tournament was at a very high level. I was sure that the Olympiad in Baku would also be well-organized. Interestingly, 30 years ago Azerbaijan was not a strong team: usually ranked around 10th place among Republics of USSR. Since then, they have made huge progress, mainly because of Gary Kasparov, who was born in Baku, and now they are second by rating, behind only Russia, but above Ukraine and Armenia. The huge popularity of chess in Azerbaijan, combined with a traditional eastern hospitality promised a high level of organization and they did not disappoint.



Our Team

Two years ago, the addition of Anton Kovalyov made a significant impact on our team. Now it was Evgeny Bareev's turn to make us stronger. Canada would have been ranked around 50th without Bareev and Kovalyov, but with them we were in the top-30 this Olympiad. Being an attractive target for immigration from the former Soviet Union definitely helps!

To be honest, I felt slightly uncomfortable to be the captain for Evgeny Bareev, who has huge experience not only as a player, but also as a coach and a captain. As a player Evgney won four Olympiad gold medals (with the USSR in 1990, with Russia in 1994, '96 and '98), and he was Kramnik's second in the historical 2000 World Championship

match against Kasparov, a match which completely changed the modern chess history.

Evgeny had played just 2 tournaments in the last 5 years, but was able to maintain his very high rating of 2660+. Obviously, it was too optimistic to expect that at age of 50 Evgeny would significantly improve his rating at the Olympiad. However, his addition made our team much better. Thanks to Evgeny, we successfully collaborated during the Olympiad. He had an important role to create a positive atmosphere for our team.

Our other two GMs, Anton Kovalyov and Eric Hansen, represented Canada in the previous Olympiad. Anton was great on 1st board 2 years ago with a stunning 2700 performance, probably the highest ever for Canadian player (I do not count this Olympiad.) Eric was the only player who survived from the 2012 Canadian team. Eric, who was very successful in the 2012 Olympiad, performed close to his 2580 rating in 2014.

I felt slightly uncomfortable to be the captain for Evgeny Bareev

who has huge experience not only as a player, but also as a coach and a captain.

Neither Anton nor Eric improved their rating since Tromso, which was a disappointment for me. They also did not play much in 2016 prior to the Olympiad. The main reason for my optimism about Anton was his ability to play better in important tournaments. While he often loses rating points in some random American events, he performs much stronger in tournaments like the World Cup (he advanced to 3rd round last year), Pan-American championships (twice qualified to World Cup), or the Olympiad. The main question about Eric for me as a captain was if he will be hungry, like in 2012, or not-so-hungry, like in 2014. Now we all know the answer, but as of a few months ago it was absolutely unclear to me.

Tomas Krnan deserved the spot in the Canadian Team by winning the Canadian Closed last year. Tomas won his last round game with Black against tournament leader IM Leonid Gerzhoy. As a result, Tomas shared 1-3 place with Hansen and Gerzhoy and got a better tie-break thanks to the win over Leonid (both players drew Eric). It was a very complicated situation before the last round, 5 players had a chance to win a championship. In this situation, Tomas's ability to play normally and beat a solid opponent with Black should be really appreciated. Luck alone is not enough to win such a strong tournament. Like the other Canadian Olympians, Tomas did not play much since 2015. Still, I was fairly optimistic that he would perform above his 2430 rating.

All 4 qualified players were willing to play and accepted the invitation. So now, it was the traditional moment for the Selection Committee to make its decision.

Selection Committee

Many months before the deadline, the decision the Selection Committee (SC) had to make was the only remaining question about the Olympiad roster. The gap between top 3 players and the rest of the field was too significant. All qualified players accepted their invitations and there were almost no rating changes for the top Canadian players since the 2015 Canadian Closed.

The Captain has absolutely no impact on the choice of picking the fifth player to fit the roster. So, I waited for the end of this process and created my own predictions. I thought GM Bator Sambuev was the favourite to be selected, while Razvan Preotu also had some real chances. If I were to translate my predictions into numbers, it would be something like this: Bator - 70%, Razvan - 25% and 5% for the rest of the field, mostly for Alexandre Le Siege and Nikolay Noritsyn. Just a reminder, the FIDE rating at that time for the players was: Sambuev - 2540, Le Siege - 2500, Noritsyn - 2480 and Preotu - 2460.

When the decision was announced, I was beyond surprised. To be honest, I was shocked. Of course, I knew that the SC is usually unpredictable. I knew that many times in the recent years, the decisions of the SC were controversial. However, this time it was likely the most unpredictable decision of the last 20 years. Thus, it created a huge wave of criticism of the SC in the chess community.

After my initial disappointment, I started to re-evaluate the new situation. It did not look too promising. Alex Le Siege was a very talented and strong player with a rating of almost 2600, but that was 20 years ago. He quit chess for more than 10 years and did not play from 2004 to 2015. I started playing chess in Canada in 2004, where he was already inactive, and Alex was the only active elite Canadian player I had never met up to that point. In a few tournaments since his great comeback, Alex was performing of around 2300. I saw some of his games from that period: many blunders, and too many losses to very low-rated opponents.

The decision of the SC is irrevocable, so I had no choice but to try to find the best strategy for our team with Le Siege. The first, and very important, decision for me as a captain was the board order. I decided to wait with the publication of the board order until the last month before the Olympiad. I was expecting more information about the Alex's current shape with his performance in other tournaments. Within the last few months before the Olympiad, he played only one tournament, and it was the Quebec Open.

I was following the Quebec Open, and actually found myself in a very strange situation: I was rooting for Alex. It clearly was a difficult time for Alex with a lot of negative comments on different chess forums. I really wanted

When the decision was announced, I was beyond surprised. To be honest, I was shocked.

him to show his potential, not only to everyone in Canadian chess, but mainly for himself. Hopefully, this would get back some of his confidence.

He won the Quebec Open with 7.5 out of 8, including 2 wins against GMs. I saw all of his games, and I was very pleased. Before this tournament, I was thinking about how to minimize the damage of the SC's decision. After the Quebec Open, I completely changed my approach.

Board Order

Two years ago I deviated from the traditional board order (higher-rated player plays on a higher board) and put Sambuev on board 4 and Gerzhoy on board 3, although Gerzhoy was lower-rated than Sambuev. I had enough reasons to do so. The main reason was the well-known ability that Bator had to score a lot of points against lower-rated opponents. The second idea was to create more flexibility with colour for Bator, especially against strong players: by placing an extra board ahead of him there would be an extra option each round of who to rest to give Bator a favourable colour.

This time, I had only one reason to switch from the traditional board order and place Hansen on board 4 and Le Siege on board 3. I wanted Eric to play as many Whites as possible. With Eric on board 3, my ability to manage the colour for him would have been very limited, but we had much more flexibility with him on board 4.

If team Canada plays White, I can place the line-up of Bareev-Kovalyov-Hansen-Krnan. With Black on the first board, the line-up could be Bareev-Kovalyov-Le Siege-Hansen. In both cases, Eric gets White. The problem with this strategy is that there will be a lot of Blacks for Alex and Tomas. Their ability to perform normally with Black is critical. However, the main question was: can Eric score a lot of points with White?

I used this strategy with Eric four years ago in Istanbul. That time, he played White the whole second half of the Olympiad. Noritsyn was playing on board 3, and Hansen on board 4. It worked well for both players since Nikolay is one of the very few Canadian players who plays better with Black.

Usually, the White colour is equal to around 40 extra rating points. For example, a 2500 player is supposed to score around 50% with White against a 2540 player and the same with Black against a 2460 opponent. So the gap between "White performance" and "Black performance" should be around 80 points. If a certain player "likes White" then the gap is wider. Among top Canadian players, Hansen and Sambuev are better with White, while Noritsyn and Hambleton prefer Black.

Another advantage of this strategy is the option for the captain to stop it at any time. If Eric was not scoring enough with White, or if Le Siege/Krnan do not get enough points with Black, I could stop "colour managing" with Hansen on board 4, and Le Siege on board 3.

I exchanged emails with Eric, and he fully accepted this idea. I also got some positive responses from other team players. Later, I posted the board order on the CFC cite and on Chesstalk. As I expected, some comments were negative, especially about Alex's ability to play on board 3. Obviously, I understood that we were taking some risk, but at the same time I also saw great upside of this strategy, and luckily it paid off.

I wanted Eric to play as many Whites as possible. The problem with this strategy is that there will be a lot of Blacks for Alex and Tomas.

The 1st day

The board order and the whole strategy of having Eric to play as White almost didn't happen. Here is the story about it.

My airplane was scheduled to arrive at Baku after 7 PM, about 1 hour before the Captains' Meeting, which started at 8:30 PM. I attended the Captains' Meeting on 2 previous Olympiads. Organizers use this meeting to announce the rules. During the meeting, the captains are provided the "Fixed Board Order" and get the password for submitting the day-by-day team composition. Unlike the Opening Ceremony, the Captains' Meeting is rather short, and lasts only about 45 minutes.

Every round, except the last one, started at 3 PM, and the deadline for submitting the line-up was at 10 AM. If, for some reason, the captain fails to submit the team composition for a certain round or the Fixed Board Order on time, then the "default" is used. The "default" for the team composition means that board 5 does not play. The "default" for the Fixed Board Order is taken according to the registration of the team. In our case, this registration was sent by the CFC a few weeks before the start of the tournament. In this registration we followed FIDE ratings and so Hansen was ahead of Le Siege. I had to go to the Captains Meeting to change it or our whole board order strategy could not work.

I realized that I could miss the Captains' Meeting with the delay of my airplane. A few days before departure, I sent an email to the Women's Team Captain, Aman Hambleton, and asked him to submit the Fixed Board Order for our National Team if I were to miss the Captains' Meeting. I also sent a copy of this email to Canadian FIDE Representative Hal Bond.

After arriving in Baku an hour later than expected due to delay, it was clear to me that I was missing the Captains' Meeting. Upon arrival, I immediately switched on my cellphone and checked my emails. One of them was from Canadian Women's Team player Alexandra Botez: Aman had missed his first flight!

Aman had missed his first flight!

This was devastating news because I thought that I wouldn't be able to submit the board order that I spent weeks preparing. I took a taxi to the arena, where the Opening Ceremony and the Captains' Meeting were taking place. As I expected, it was too late and everything was already closed. I took another taxi to the hotel and checked in. I found a lot of volunteers in the lobby, but they were unable to provide me with any useful information. They gave me some phone numbers, but unfortunately it was too late to reach anybody from the Organizing Committee.

In the hotel, I met Alexandra Botez and Yuanling Yuan from the Women's Team. They were also unhappy with the situation and asked me some questions about badges and other things that were given at the Captains' Meeting that I missed out on. I promised them that I would have a team meeting for the Women's Team as well. I also sent emails to the players of the National Team about the team meeting. Meetings for both teams were arranged for 9 AM the next day. My hope was that from 7-8 AM I would get some help from organizers.

I've known Vlad for almost 10 years. At no other time was I so happy to see him.

It was almost midnight already. In my last attempt to get some help, I went to the lobby again. I saw Vlad Drkulec, the CFC President and the Head of Canadian Delegation, in line for checking in. And I was very pleased when I saw that he was holding two big White envelopes. I remembered those envelopes. They are distributed during the Captains' Meeting and include all information and, the most importantly, the passwords.

I've known Vlad for almost 10 years. At no other time was I so happy to see him. He and Hal were informed that Aman missed his flight and they decided to go straight from the airport to the Captains' Meeting before going to hotel. They were on time and successfully provided the Fixed Board Order and got envelopes with badges, passwords and other useful information. I gave a huge sigh of relief when I realized that I was able to get the proper board order set into place.

A Good Start

Round 1:
Canada 4 - Honduras 0

After some adventures on the arrival day, the first round went really smoothly. The Olympiad is paired as a swiss system, and the first rounds always produce mismatches; a score of 4-0 is very common in the 1st round and it happens in about 75% of the matches. We got a rather easy opponent and everyone was able to get good positions from the opening, and we won 4-0.

Round 2:
Canada 4 -Tajikistan 0

Two years ago we also won 4-0 in the first round. This time, thanks to our higher initial ranking, the first round win gave us a lower-rated opponent in the 2nd round. Two years ago we got India.

Because our first two rounds were easy in comparison to previous years, I was able to rest the top players while giving our lower-rated teammates more games to play. Anton did not play in the 1st round, while Evgeny did not play against Tajikistan. It was a somewhat risky decision to play without the highest-rated player in the second round, but we were still favourites to win the match. Tajikistan's top two players had a rating a bit lower than Kovalyov and Le Siege, but their 3rd and 4th boards had ratings that were approximately 300 points lower than our 3rd and 4th boards.

Anton won a pawn in the opening. While his game was fairly long, computer analysis showed that he was close to winning the entire time. Alex found a nice tactic and won a central pawn and converted very smoothly. With our expected victories on boards 3 and 4, we won this match 4-0.

While team points are most important for the final standing, individual points have significant impact on it. Many participants know about the Buchholtz system as the most popular tie-breaker for swiss events. The Buchholtz works by using the total number of points gained by the opposition. However, in the Olympiad, another system is used, called **Sonneborn-Berger**. This system works by counting the number of the opponent's team's points, multiplied by your score against this opponent. The first tie-break is counted as a sum of those numbers. The score against the worst team in

the final standing is not counted.

In our case, usually our opponent in the 1st round is the worst team, and a score against them is not counted for the tie-break. Our result in the 2nd round gave us 44 points (4x11=44). Just for comparison, our wins in later rounds against strong teams like Cuba or Belarus gave us fewer points: Cuba "contributed" 42 points (3x14=42) and Belarus just 37.5 points (2.5x15=37.5). One can see this system as a combination of the Buchholtz and individual points. Usually, individual points are more important for the tie-break than Buchholtz.

Round 3:
Canada 1.5 - England 2.5

Looking back, this was our most difficult match of the Olympiad. It was the only match we never had any chances to win. After only two hours it seemed like the final match score would be 0.5-3.5. The "endgame miracle" on board 2 gave us some hopes for the draw, but Eric could not create serious problems for Nigel Short on 4th board.

our most difficult match

After only two hours it seemed like the final match score would be 0.5-3.5.

Interestingly, our match against England in Norway in 2014 had an absolutely different scenario. We got very promising positions from the opening, but at the end we lost 1-3. At that time, Bator's loss to Howell in a winning position was critical for the team. This time, Howell's game was also the most interesting in the match.

Anton got surprised in the opening, and he spent 50 minutes for one move. He did not find the best continuation and found himself in a bad endgame. In most cases Anton plays very fast, but this was the first time I ever saw him in time trouble. Anton gave up a pawn, gained it back and the game transposed into the rook ending, which was very difficult for him.

By that time, the score was already 2-0 in favour of England, due to our fast losses on boards 1 and 3.

Eric had a better position on the last board, and Short looked very unhappy. According to the match situation, Howell should have played safe and attempted to avoid any complications because a draw in his game guaranteed a match win for England. Instead, he chose a risky plan that gave Anton dangerous counterplay. Even though Anton and Howell were in time trouble, Howell was the first to make a big mistake and eventually lost the game.

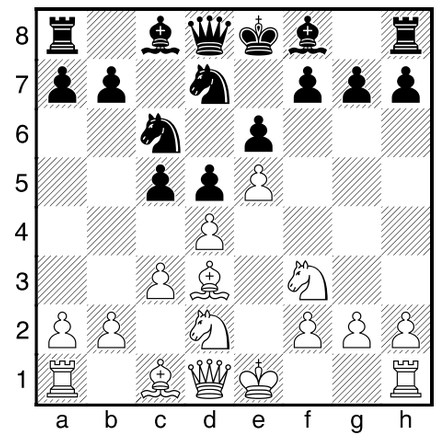
Eric drew his game, and we lost the match 1.5-2.5, but we gave England a good run for its money. Two years ago, our inability to fight in bad positions was very disappointing for me. In Norway we lost 0.5-3.5 twice, against Brazil and India. It was clearly different this time, and so, despite the loss, I found some reasons to be cautiously optimistic going forward from round 3.

- Victor Plotkin

Adams,Michael (2738)
Bareev,Evgeny (2675)
C06
42nd Olympiad Baku (3.1), 04.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

A strange game. White offers to play a gambit, Black declines with a dubious side-line, and White (should) have a winning position by move 15. Adams plays less incisively, missing several opportunities for a winning attack, but he is always clearly better and wins by dominating the light squares.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.♘gf3 ♘f6 5.e5 ♘fd7 6.c3 ♘c6 7.♗d3

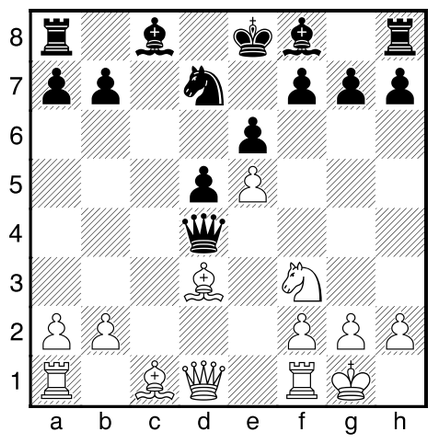


The game has transposed to the **Universal System of the French Tarrasch**. The critical test used to be ...♕b6, when White is prepared to give up the d4-pawn for rapid development after 7...♕b6. However, White clearly has enough comp for the pawn, so Black has looked for ways to avoid it:

7...f6

7...h6!? transposes to positions more often arising from 3...h6.
7...g5!? 8.h3 h5 when Black's results have been OK.
7...g6 8.h4 h6 is recommended by Berg in his *GM Repertoire: The French* Vol.3, (Quality, 2015).
7...♕b6 8.0-0 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘xd4 10.♘xd4 ♕xd4 11.♘f3:

Analysis Diagram



This is the main line of the **Korchnoi gambit,** with a position which is very similar to the Milner−Barry gambit against the Advance French, but here Black's ♘ is on d7 rather than his ♗; that difference is bad for Black, who cannot comfortably complete development with ...♘g8-e7-c6 as in the MBG.

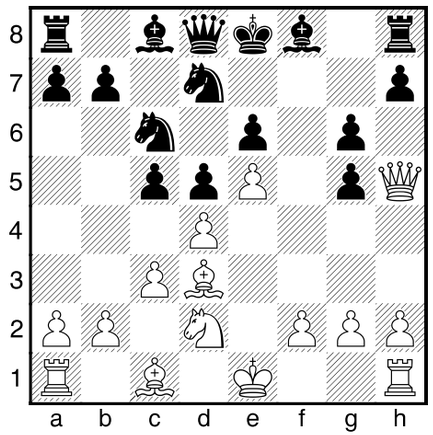
The following game shows just how unpleasant Black's position can become: 11...♕b6 12.♕a4 ♕b4 13.♕c2 h6 *(13...♘c5* is the modern try, *14.♗d2 ♕a4* and White scores well after either b3 or ♗xh7.*)* 14.♗d2 ♕b6 15.♖ac1 ♗e7 16.♕a4 ♕d8 17.♖c2 ♔f8 *(17...0-0 18.♕g4* with a huge initiative.*)* 18.♖fc1 ♘b6 19.♕g4 ♗d7 20.♗a5 ♖c8 21.♖xc8 ♗xc8 22.♗b4 g6 23.♕h4 g5 24.♘xg5 ♔e8 25.♗b5+ *(25.♗xe7! ♕xe7 26.f4!+-)* 25...♗d7 26.♘xe6! fxe6 *(26...♗xh4 27.♘g7#)* 27.♕h5+ ♔f8 28.♖c3 ♖h7 29.♕g6 ♖g7 30.♕xh6! ♗xb4 31.♖g3 1-0 Kortschnoi,V−Udovcic,M Leningrad, 1967.

8.exf6

8.♘g5? was tried by Tal, who bluffed Bronstein into avoiding the critical (and hugely advantageous for Black) ...fxg5. Their game went: *8...♘dxe5?! 9.dxe5 fxg5 10.♕h5+ ♔d7 11.♘f3 g6 12.♗xg6 g4 13.♘g5*

♘xe5 14.♘xh7 ♘xg6 15.♕xg6 ♗e7± (½-½, 34) Tal,M−Bronstein,D Moscow, 1966.
8...fxg5! 9.♕h5+ g6:

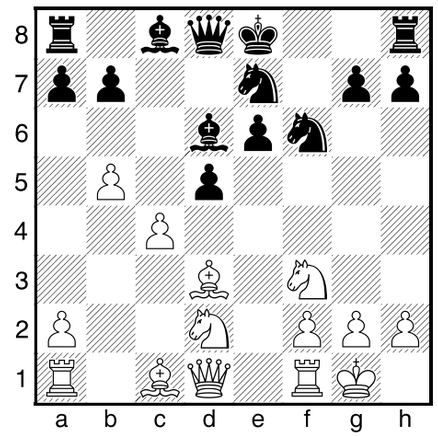
Analysis Diagram



10.♗xg6+ hxg6 11.♕xg6+ *(11.♕xh8 cxd4-+)* 11...♔e7-+ with the critical line going: 12.♘e4 ♘dxe5□ 13.♗xg5+ ♔d7 14.♘f6+ ♔c7 15.♘e8+ ♕xe8 *(15...♔b8?? 16.♗xd8 ♘xg6 17.♗c7#)* 16.♕xe8 ♗g7 trapping the ♕! 17.♗d8+ ♔b8-+ (0-1, 34) Rjabzev,K (2406)−Kosyrev,V (2537) St Petersburg, 2006.

8...♘xf6 9.0-0 ♗d6?!
⌓9...cxd4 avoids the space gaining pawn pushes and breaks which tear apart Black's center in this game. 10.cxd4 ♗d6 11.♖e1± *or 11.b3±.*

10.dxc5! ♗xc5 11.b4! ♗d6 12.b5! ♘e7 13.c4!



Black's position is already difficult. He lashes out, but it does not confuse the unflappable Adams.

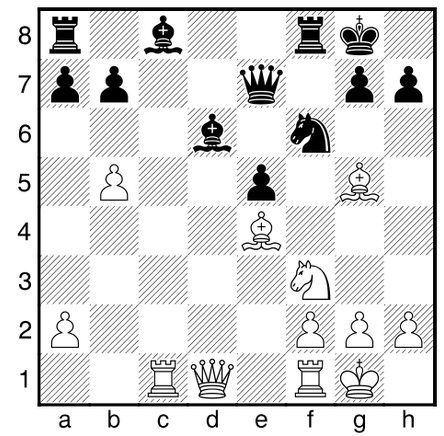
13...e5?
⌓13...0-0.

14.cxd5! ♘exd5?! 15.♘e4±
Good enough for a clear advantage, but White is winning if he switches to an attack on the a2-g8 diagonal:

⌓15.♗c4! looks like a nearly forced win; e.g. 15...♗e6 16.♘g5 *(16.♕b3+-* is also very strong.*)* 16...♗g8 17.♗b2+- I don't think Black can survive long enough to get his ♔ out of the firing lines.

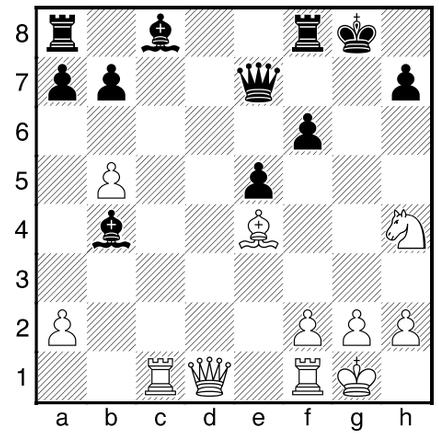
15...♘xe4 16.♗xe4 ♘f6
16...♘c3 17.♕d3 ♘xe4 18.♕xe4 ♕f6 *(18...0-0? 19.♘g5 g6 20.♕d5+ ♔g7 21.♗b2+-)* 19.♗b2±.

17.♗g5 0-0 18.♖c1 ♕e7



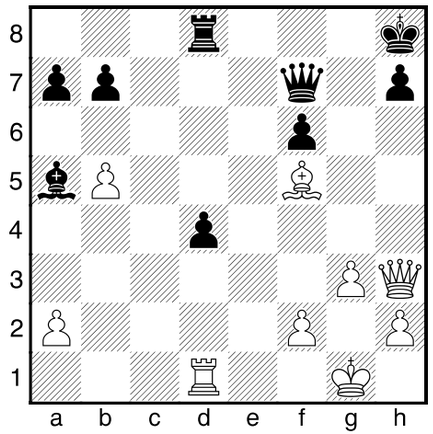
19.♗xf6
19.♕c2 ♔h8 *(19...h6? 20.♗h7+ ♔h8 21.♘h4+-)* 20.♗xh7 e4! 21.♗xf6 ♕xf6 22.♗xe4 ♗g4 looks like Black might get some counterplay, though computers rate White as nearly winning with accurate defence; e.g. 23.♕b3 ♕f4 24.♖c4□ ♗xf3 *(⌓24...♗e6! 25.♗d5 ♗xd5 26.♖xf4 ♗xb3 27.♖h4+±)* 25.g3□+- White gets the piece back because of the mate threat: 25...♕f7 26.♗xf3 ♕xf3 27.♖h4+ mates.

19...gxf6 20.♘h4 ♗b4



21.♖c4
21.♖xc8! is more brutal, and a surprising move for a player of Adams' class to miss: 21...♖fxc8 22.♘f5+- and the ♕ is overloaded, so Black has to give up the ♗ to ♕b3+ or an exchange and a pawn to ♗xb7.

21...♗a5 22.♘f5 ♗xf5 23.♗xf5 ♖ad8 24.♕h5± ♔h8 25.♕h3 ♖d4 26.♖fc1 ♖fd8 27.g3 ♕f7 28.♖xd4 exd4 29.♖d1



Material is equal, and Black has a passed pawn, but White is clearly better because Black's pawn can't advance and Black is very weak on the light squares. Adams activates his ♖ and the game is over.

29...b6?!
29...♗c3 30.♖d3 is similar to the game.

30.♖d3
30.♕h4! ♗c3 31.♗xh7+-.

30...♗b4 31.♖f3 ♖f8 32.♖f4
There's no defence to ♖h4 or ♖xd4.

1-0

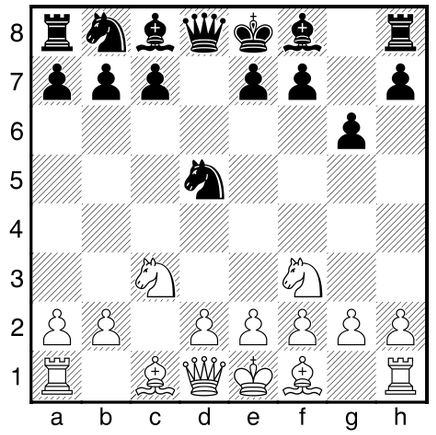
Kovalyov,Anton (2617)
Howell,David W L (2665)
D90
42nd Olympiad Baku (3.2), 04.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

A very lucky escape: White mishandles the early middlegame in an anti-Grunfeld and is clearly worse. Black trades down to a winning Rook ending, but Howell grossly misplays it (in his habitual time trouble) and White scores the win.

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3
A popular anti−Grunfeld line.

3...d5
but Black insists on playing Gruenfeld−style.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5



5.♕b3
White has more savage options:

5.♕a4+ ♗d7 6.♕h4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 ♘c6 ½-½ (38) Vitiugov,N − Svidler,P, Moscow, 2010.

5.h4 ♗g7 6.h5 ♘c6 7.g3 ♗g4∞ (1-0, 39) Ding,L−Wei,Y Baku, 2015.

5...♘b6 6.d4 ♗g7 7.♗f4 ♗e6 8.♕a3 c5!?
A good pawn sac for piece activity. ...♘c6 is also played, but it doesn't pose the same

Canada's *first-ever* all-GM Lineup

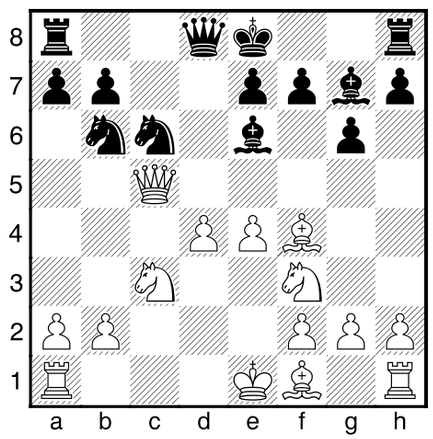
September 4, 2016

GM Evgeny Bareev
GM Anton Kovalyov
GM Alexandre Le Siege
GM Eric Hansen

challenge for White: 8...♘c6 9.e3±.

9.♕xc5
9.dxc5 ♘c4 10.♕a4+ ♘d7 and Black has too much activity while White is too far behind in development.

9...♘c6 10.e4

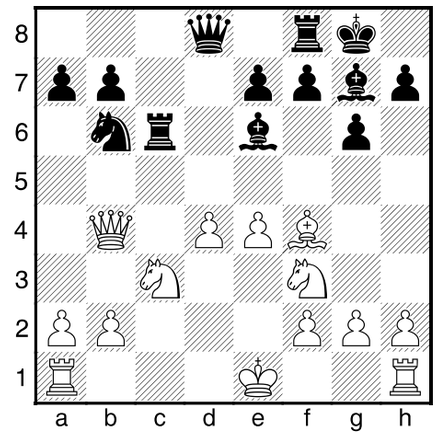


10...♖c8
10...♘d7 11.♕a3 ♘xd4 12.♘xd4 ♗xd4 13.♗b5± (1-0, 31) Xiong,J (2641)−Troff,K (2543) Saint Louis US U20, 2016.

10...♘xd4 11.♘xd4 ♗xd4 12.♗b5+ ♔f8 13.♕a3 a6 14.♗e2 ♕c8 15.0-0 ♕c5 16.♗h6+ ♔e8 17.♕xc5 ♗xc5 18.♖ac1± (½-½, 67) Radjabov,T−Sevian,S Baku, 2015.

11.♗b5
11.♕a3 as in the Xiong game above and Radjabov game below.

11...0-0 12.♗xc6 ♖xc6 13.♕b4

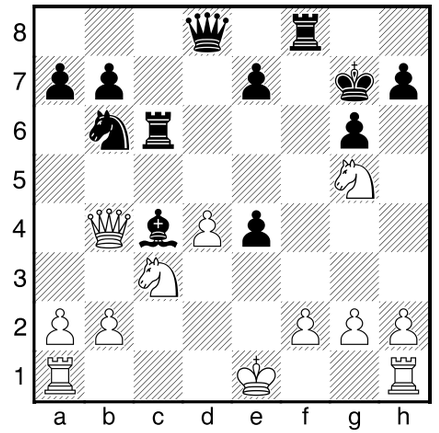


13...f5N
13...♖c4 14.♕a3 ♗xd4 15.♘xd4 ♖xd4 16.0-0 a6 17.b3 ♖e8 18.♖fd1 ♖xd1+ 19.♖xd1± Radjabov,T−Vachier Lagrave,M Berlin (blitz), 2015.

14.♗e5?!
14.♘e5∞;
14.d5? ♖c4-+ followed by ...♗xc3+ and ...♖xe4.

14...fxe4 15.♘g5?!
15.♘xe4.

15...♗c4 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7



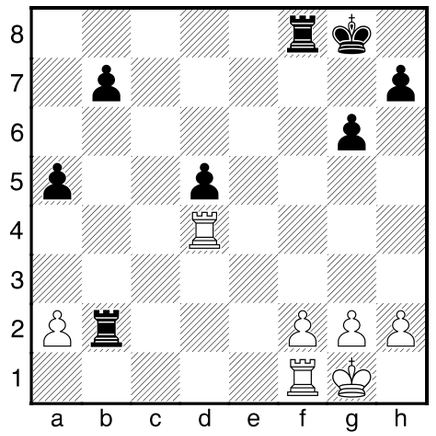
White can't hold the pawn and get his King to safety, so he returns it to try to uncoordinate Black a little.

17.d5
17.0-0-0?? ♗d3! or 17...♖xf2!. 17.♖d1 e3! 18.fxe3 e6 19.h4 ♕c7-+.

17...♘xd5 18.♘xd5
18.♕xc4 ♖xc4 19.♘e6+ ♔f6 20.♘xd8 ♖xd8∓.

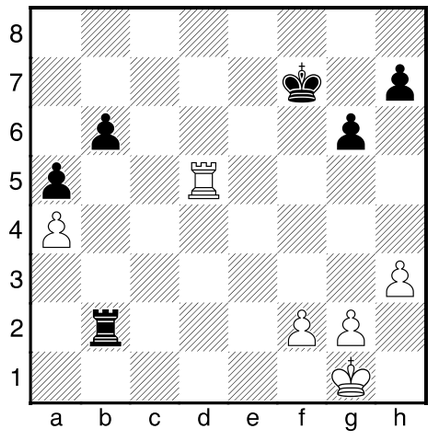
18...♗xd5 19.♖d1 ♔g8
19...♖f5! 20.♘xe4 ♕c7∓ threatening ...♖c4, Black has a huge lead in development and that ought to turn into a few extra pawns. *(20...♖e5? 21.♕d4±).*

20.0-0 e6 21.♘xe4 ♕b6 22.♖d4 ♕xb4 23.♖xb4 a5 24.♖d4 ♖c2 25.♘c3 ♖xb2 26.♘xd5 exd5



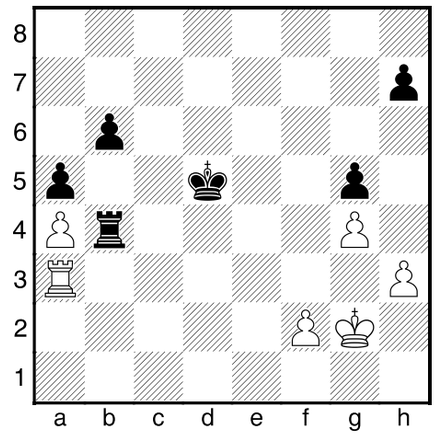
27.a4
27.♖xd5 ♖xa2 28.♖b5 ♖f7-+ pressure on f2 (and along the 2nd rank after ...♖c7) prevents White from going after the b−pawn.

27...♖d8 28.♖e1 ♖d7 29.h3 ♔f7 30.♖e5 b6 31.♖exd5 ♖xd5 32.♖xd5



32...♔e6
32...♖b4 also looks good enough to win, but it can result in some tempi−sensitive races which it's prudent for a player in time trouble to avoid. 33.♖d7+ *(33.♖b5? ♖xb5 34.axb5 a4-+)* 33...♔e6 34.♖b7 *(34.♖xh7 ♖xa4 looks winning.)* 34...♔d5 35.g4 ♔c5 *(35...b5? 36.axb5 ♔c5 37.♖xh7 ♖xb5 38.♖a7 ♔b6 39.♖a8 ♔b7 40.♖d8 a4* White has enough play for a draw.*)* 36.♖c7+ ♔d4 37.♖b7 ♔c3-+.

33.♖d3 ♖b4 34.♖a3 ♔d5 35.g4 g5 36.♔g2



36...♔c4
36...b5!? 37.axb5 a4!∓ *(37...♖xb5? 38.h4!=).*

37.h4! h6 38.h5?
38.hxg5! hxg5 39.f4=.

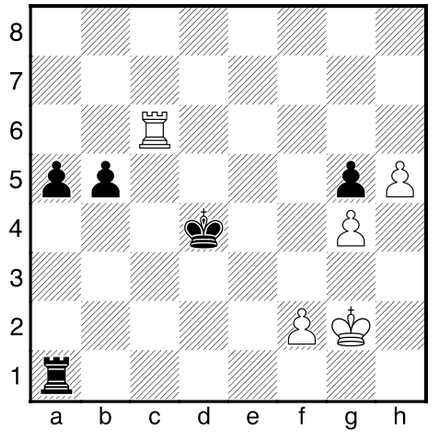
38...♔c5 39.♔g3 ♖c4?
39...b5! 40.axb5 a4-+.

40.♖f3! ♖xa4 41.♖f5+! ♔d4 42.♖f6 b5 43.♖xh6 ♖a1 44.♖d6+ ♔c3 45.♖c6+ ♔d4 46.♔g2

48 TVs and nothing on but chess!

The elevated area — the podium — was where all the top teams played.

Canada spent most of the event there.



Preventing ...♖h1. Computers rate this as equal, but Black may already be lost.

46...♖e1 47.h6 ♖e8

47...♖e4 48.f3 ♖e2+ 49.♔g3 ♖e7 *(49...b4 50.♖d6+ ♔c4 51.♖d8 ♖e7 52.f4+-)* 50.♖d6+! ♔c3 *(50...♔e5 51.♖g6!+-; 50...♔c5 51.♖g6+-)* 51.f4 ♖e3+ 52.♔f2 gxf4 53.g5 ♖h3 54.♖d7 a4 55.h7 a3 56.g6 a2 57.♖a7+-.

48.f4!+- gxf4 49.g5 ♔e3 50.g6 f3+ 51.♔f1 ♖d8 52.♖e6+ ♔f4 53.g7 ♖d1+ 54.♖e1

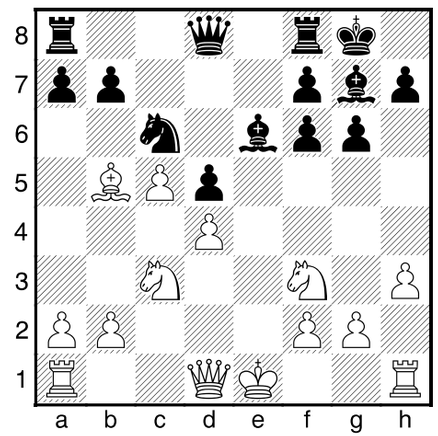
1-0

Jones,Gawain C B (2635)
LeSiege,Alexandre (2497)

B13
42nd Olympiad Baku (3.3), 04.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

This is Alex's one bad game of the Olympiad... and it's due pretty much to one bad move.

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6 4.e3 ♘f6 5.d4 cxd4 6.exd4 d5 7.♗g5 ♗e6 8.♗xf6 exf6 9.c5 ♗g7 10.♗b5 0-0 11.h3



11...g5!?

Not as crazy as it looks. Black has a choice of which of his ♗s he will bury behind his pawns.

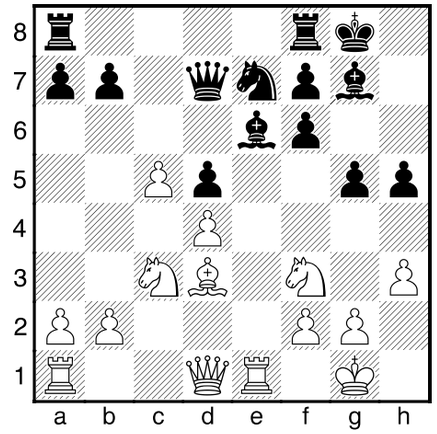
Le Siege buries the ♗g7 and (maybe?) hopes for activity with ...g4 or (long term) ...♗f8 over to c7.

In the game below, Bolgan played ...f5 and turned the ♗e6 into a big pawn and had no play: ***11...♘e7*** 12.0-0 f5 13.♖e1 h6 14.♕d2 a6 15.♗a4 b5 16.cxb6 ♕xb6 17.♗b3 ♕b4 18.♖ad1 a5 19.♘a4 ♖fb8 20.♕e3 ♕d6 21.♘c5 f4! and although White kept pressure he wasn't able to turn it into anything. 22.♕e2 Vachier Lagrave,M−Bologan,V Melilla, 2011.

11...♗f5 12.0-0 ♗e4 13.♘h2 a6 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♕a4 ♕c7 (1-0, 45) Jones,G (2642)−Idani,P (2496) Reykjavik, 2015.

12.0-0 ♘e7
13.♗d3 ♕d7
14.♖e1 h5??

14...♘g6 and 14...♘c6 were better.



15.♘h2!

Black must have overlooked this not−too−uncommon defence against ...g4, because he's

Foreshadowing!!

see p.116

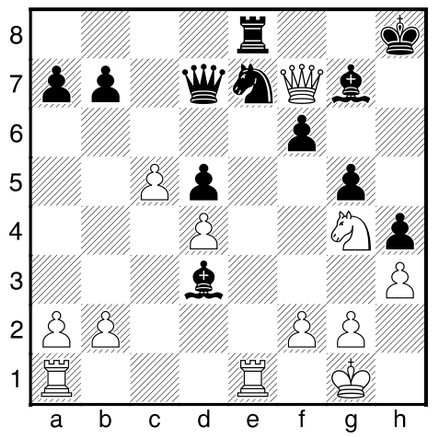
already almost lost: Black's kingside is all targets and White has an attack for free.

15...h4
15...g4 is bad, but maybe best; e.g. 16.hxg4 hxg4 17.♘xg4 ♗xg4 18.♖xe7 ♕xe7 19.♕xg4± White will win another pawn and have excellent light square play.

16.♕h5! ♖fe8 17.♘b5! ♗f5
17...♘c8 defending d6 and f7 18.f4 gxf4 19.♘f3+-.

18.♘d6! ♗xd3
18...♖f8 19.♖xe7+-.

19.♕xf7+ ♔h8 20.♘xe8 ♖xe8 21.♘g4



Material is almost equal (Rp vs BB) but Black can hardly move while White starts chopping.

21...♕d8
21...f5 22.♘e5 ♗xe5 23.♖xe5+- with threat of ♖e6-h6 or doubling on the e−file.

21...♗g6 22.♖xe7□ ♕xe7 23.♕xg6 is a slower way to lose: 23...♕e4 24.♕h5+ ♔g8 25.♘e3 ♖e7 26.♖d1+- White's up a pawn with a safer ♔ and better minor piece.

22.♘xf6□+- ♗xf6 23.♕xf6+ ♔g8 24.♕xg5+ ♘g6 25.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 26.♕xd5+ ♔h8 27.♕xb7 ♗b5 28.♕f3 ♕e7 29.a4

1-0

Suits

Hansen and Short dressed for a fight.

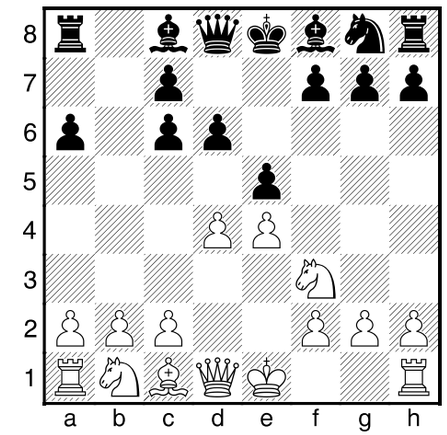
Hansen, Eric (2582) Short, Nigel D (2666)

C73
42nd Olympiad Baku (3.4), 04.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

English veteran Nigel Short — about whom it seems obligatory to note that he is the oldest player in the FIDE top 100 — had a good Olympiad: he scored 6.5/9 including wins as Black against opponents from China and Azerbaijan, losing only one game, to Indian GM Sethuraman.

This was tough game. Short plays a 4...d6 Lopez, White gets pressure but Short's ♘f7 holds him together in the center and kingside. Eric has chances to convert in a Q and R position, but can't find it in time pressure and the game ends in a draw.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 d6 5.♗xc6+ bxc6 6.d4



6...f6
6...exd4 7.♕xd4 ♘f6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.e5 c5! 10.♕d3 dxe5!= (½-½, 26) Kasparov,G−Short,N WCh (g19) London, 1993.

7.c4 g6
7...♘e7 8.♘c3 c5 9.dxc5 dxc5 10.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11.b3 ♘c6 12.0-

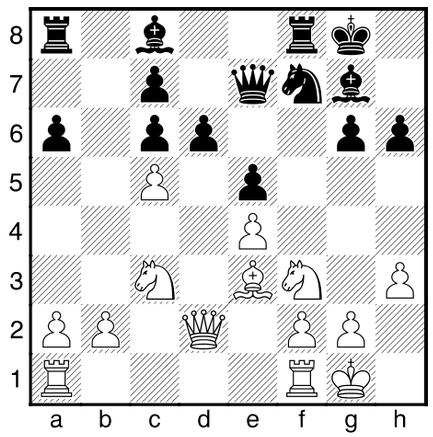
0 ♘d4 13.♘e1 ♗d6 14.♘d3 ♗d7 15.♖b1 a5 16.♗a3 ♘e6 17.♖fd1 ♔e7= (0-1, 59) Trott,A−Euwe,M Beverwijk, 1953.

8.♘c3 ♗g7

8...♘h6 9.♕a4 ♗d7 10.c5! ♘f7 11.0-0 dxc5 12.dxe5 fxe5 13.♗e3± ♗d6 14.♕c4 ♕e7 15.♘a4 ♗e6 16.♕c2 c4 17.♘d2 0-0 18.♘xc4 led to an win at the Olympiad for Canadian champion Frank Anderson: Anderson,F−De Greif,B Amsterdam Ol, 1954 (1-0, 43).

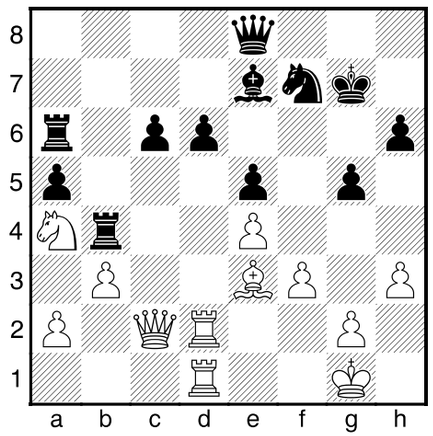
9.h3 ♘h6 10.♗e3 0-0 11.♕d2 ♘f7 12.0-0 ♕e7 13.dxe5 fxe5 14.c5 h6

14...a5.



Unlike the Anderson game above, Short is unwilling to be saddled with three weak pawns on the c−file.

15.♖fd1 ♗e6 16.♕c2 ♔h7 17.♖d2 ♖fb8 18.♖ad1 a5 19.b3 ♗f8 20.cxd6 cxd6 21.♘a4 ♕e8 22.♘e1 g5 23.♘d3 ♗e7 24.♘db2 ♔g7 25.♘c4 ♗xc4 26.♕xc4 ♖b4 27.♕c2 ♖a6 28.f3±



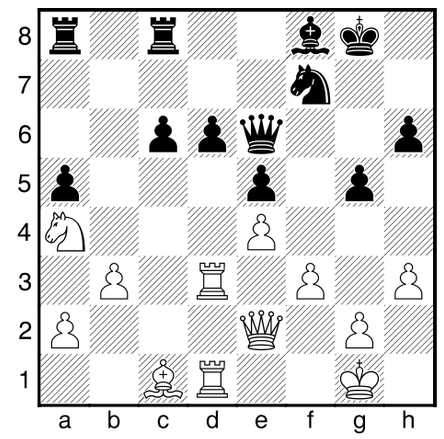
A strange position: White looks better (and computers rate this as around +1.3) but Black seems to have some kind of hanging pawns fortress.

Even if White transfers his ♗ to a3, capturing the d6 pawn would still cost an exchange.

Bringing the ♘ to c4 would allow counterplay with ...a4. White could pile up on c6, but ...♘d8 holds there. White has as much d−file pressure as he can get, but doesn't see a way to make progress... so he starts shuffling.

28...♕c8 29.♘c3 ♕e6 30.♖d3 ♔g8 31.♘a4 ♖b5 32.♘c3 ♖b4 33.♕e2 ♖a8 34.♖c1 ♗f8 35.♕c2 ♖a6 36.♖cd1 ♖b8 37.♗c1 ♖c8 38.♕e2 ♖aa8 39.♘a4?!

⌓39.♗e3.



39...d5!

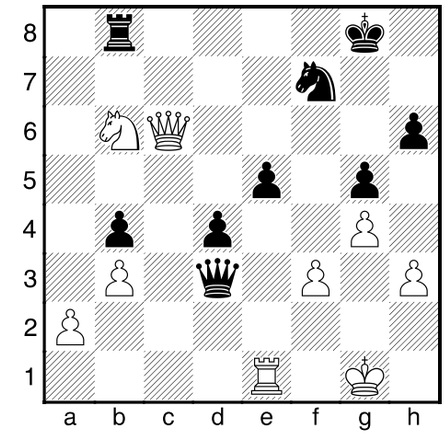
Breaks the bind.

40.♕c2

40.♘b6? ♗c5+ 41.♗e3 ♗xb6 42.♗xb6 c5! traps the ♗b6.

40.exd5!? cxd5 41.♗b2 ♖d8±.

40...♖ab8 41.♗d2 ♖b5 42.exd5 cxd5 43.♖c3 ♖bb8 44.♖c1 ♖xc3 45.♕xc3 ♗a3 46.♕c6 ♕f5 47.♖e1 d4 48.♘b6 ♗b4 49.g4 ♕d3 50.♗xb4 axb4



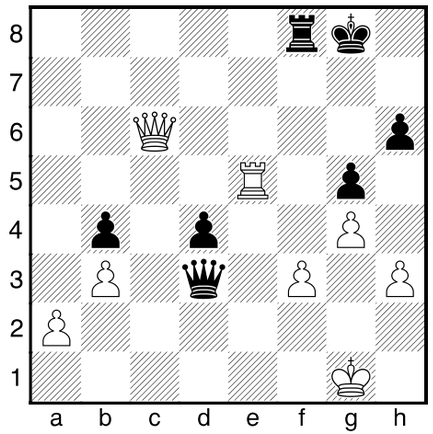
51.♘d7

51.♘d5! ♕d2 52.♖f1 d3 53.♕c7 ♖f8 54.♘e7+ ♔h7 55.♕c6+- with a winning attack.

51...♖d8! 52.♘xe5

52.♘f6+!? ♔g7 53.♘e4 keeps more attacking units around Black's ♔. 53...♕xf3? 54.♖f1+-.

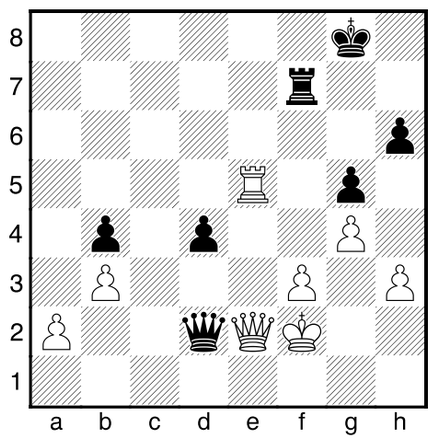
52...♘xe5 53.♖xe5 ♖f8!



At this point all the other games had been decided, and England led 2-1, so Eric needed to win the game to draw the match.

54.♔f2
54.♕d5+ ♔h8 55.♖e6 ♕d1+ 56.♔f2 ♕d2+ 57.♖e2 ♕f4 58.♔g2 ♖f7 and how does White make progress?

54...♖f7 55.♕e4 ♕d2+ 56.♕e2



56...♕f4
56...♕xe2+ 57.♔xe2 *(57.♖xe2 ♖d7 58.♖d2 ♔f7* and how does White make any progress?*)* 57...♖a7 58.♔d3 ♖xa2 59.♔xd4 ♖c2±.

57.♖e8+⊕
⌓57.♔g2 threatens ♖e4 and if ...♕d6 then ♖e6 wins the h−pawn. 57...♖d7 58.♖xg5+! hxg5 59.♕e8+ ♔h7 60.♕xd7+ again, White is clearly better, but Black's b4 and g5 pawns are both blocking two White pawns.

57...♔g7 58.♕e5+?! ♕xe5 59.♖xe5 ♖a7 60.♖b5
60.♖e2 ♔f6 61.♖d2 *(61.♖c2 ♔e5 62.♔e2 ♔f4=)* 61...♔e5=.

60...♖xa2+ 61.♔g3 ♖b2 62.♖xb4 d3 63.♖b5 ♔f6 64.h4 ♖b1 65.♖d5
Frustratingly good defence from the English old−timer.

½-½

it was too optimistic to expect that our results would be so good that this was our last opportunity to rest Eric.

Round 4: Canada 4 - Indonesia 0

Indonesia had a peculiar circumstance: their first board, and only GM, did not show up to the first three matches, and their bottom board was just a 1900 player. Despite this, they were able to achieve some respectable results, including a narrow 1.5-2.5 loss to England. So the main question for us was if their top player would arrive in time for our match against them. It was a huge difference of 600 rating points between the 1900 and their top board.

I wanted to avoid unnecessary risk and play with our top 3 highest-rated players, and I sat Le Siege out in the 4th round. Had I known that their GM would arrive only after the 5th round, I would have considered playing with both Alex and Tomas and resting Eric. Honestly, it was too optimistic to expect that our results would be so good that this was our last opportunity to rest Eric.

The match was much more difficult than expected. The cumulative rating difference was more than 1000 points, but it was clear that we had a very underrated opponent on our hands.

After the first 2 hours, we had worse positions on board 1 and 4, and equal endgames on board 2 and 3. Evgeny missed a nice trick in the early middlegame and lost a rook and 3 pawns for 2 minor pieces. With many pieces on the board, I hoped that Evgeny would find something against his 2400 rated opponent.

At approximately the 35th move in his game, Eric asked me if he should play on. As some readers know, in the Olympiad, players have an option to seek advice from a team captain about offering a draw or accepting a draw offer. It must be a simple question and a simple answer – no discussion about the position is allowed. A match arbiter should be around to monitor the entire conversation.

This was not the only time I was asked about a draw. It happened two or three times in each of the two previous Olympiads. Even with a rating difference of

200-300 points between team players and the captain, sometimes players found it useful to ask for the advice. My answer to Eric was "you must play on". I was not happy with the situation in the match and wanted to keep our options open, and I hoped that sooner or later the better team would turn the situation around. Indeed, in the second half of the match, our opponents played according to their rating and finally made some mistakes. Evgeny created a strong attack and won material. Both Anton and Eric won equal endgames. Tomas's opponent blundered a piece in relatively simple position.

The final score of 4-0 does not reflect the strong resistance the opposition showed. At the end of the Olympiad, their team had gained more than 70 rating points total. Indonesia was one of the very few teams which gained more rating points than Canada.

- Victor Plotkin

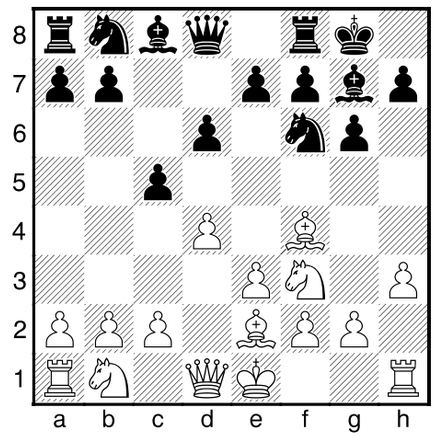
Notes by GM Evgeny Bareev

Bareev,Evgeny (2675)
Ali,Muhammad Lutfi (2411)
A41
42nd Olympiad Baku (4.17), 05.09.2016

Before the game the captain of our team admonished us about the importance of winning every game in this match. An advantage in individual points should have given us easier parings in the last rounds.

1.d4 d6 2.♘f3
Cowardly nevertheless; in my prime, I played 2.e4.

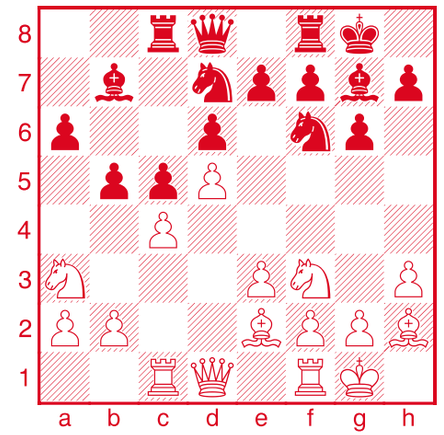
2...g6 3.♗f4 ♘f6 4.e3 ♗g7 5.h3 0-0 6.♗e2 c5



7.♘a3
White should have played: 7.0-0 I was intimidated by 7...♕b6 but after 8.♘a3 ♕xb2?! *(8...♗e6! 9.c4=)* 9.♘c4 ♕c3? 10.♖b1+- the Queen is trapped.

7...b6 8.0-0 ♗b7 9.♗h2 ♘bd7 10.♖c1 a6
10...♖c8 11.c4 ♘e4 emphasizes the clumsy position of the knight on a3.

11.c4 ♖c8 12.d5 b5



13.♘d2?!
Too optimistic. The reason for it was that there was now only 30 minutes on the clock of my contemplative opponent.
13.♕c2 ♖e8 14.e4 b4 15.♘b1 e5 16.♘e1 a5 17.♘d2 ♗h6= was correct.

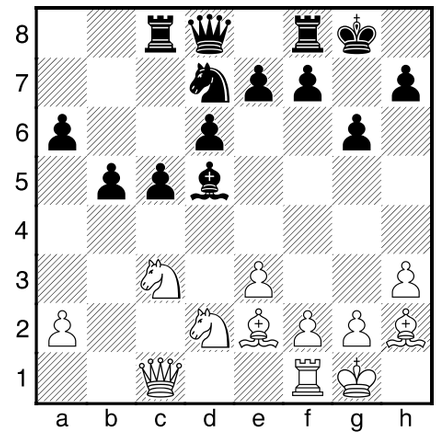
13...♘xd5!∓
At this moment I noticed our captain turn pale. His plan did not seem to be working properly. Black could force a draw after: ***13...♕a5 14.e4***:

a) 14.♘b3 ♕a4 15.♘d2 ♕xd1 *(15...♕a5=)* 16.♖fxd1 ♘b6=;

b) 14.♕c2 b4 15.♘b3 ♕c7 16.♘b1∓;

c) 14...b4 15.♘c2 ♕xa2 16.♖a1 *(16.b3 ♕a5∓)* 16...♕xb2 17.♖b1=.

14.cxd5 ♗xb2 15.♘ab1 ♗xc1 16.♕xc1 ♗xd5 17.♘c3



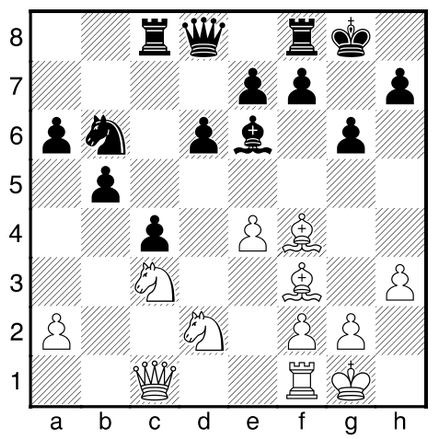
17...♗e6

Black has a material advantage and 3 connected passed pawns. White has only his belief in the endless resources of the game.
17...♗c6 18.e4 c4 *(18...e5 19.f4 c4∓)* 19.♗f4 ♘c5 20.♗h6 ♖e8∓.

18.e4 ♘b6
Wrong plan. Instead, the primitive and straightforward:18... c4 19.♘f3 *(19.a3 f6 20.♘f3 ♘c5 21.♘d4 ♗d7 22.♖d1∓)* 19... b4 20.♘d5 ♗xd5 21.exd5 ♕a5 left White with few chances to survive.

19.♗f3 c4
19...b4 20.♘d5 ♗xd5 21.exd5 c4 22.♗f4 a5 23.♖e1 a4 24.♗h6 ♖e8 25.♕d1⩲.

20.♗f4

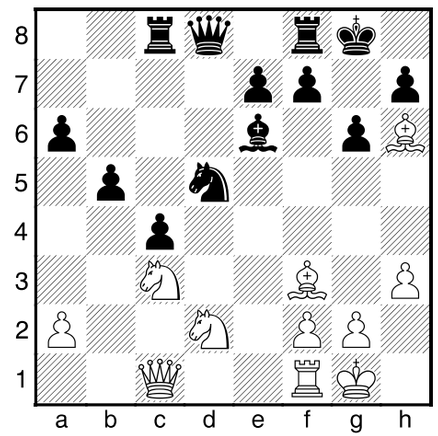


20...d5?
It was not too late to change the plan and consider pushing his queenside pawns: 20... b4 21.♘d5 a5 22.♗h6 ♖e8 23.♖e1 c3 24.♘b3 ♘c4 25.♘d4 ♘e5 26.♗e2 ♗xd5 27.exd5 ♖c5∓.

Black has a material advantage and 3 connected passed pawns.
White has only his belief in the endless resources of the game.
- Evgeny Bareev

21.exd5
I could breath freely now. White has full compensation due to his minor piece activity and threats on the king side.

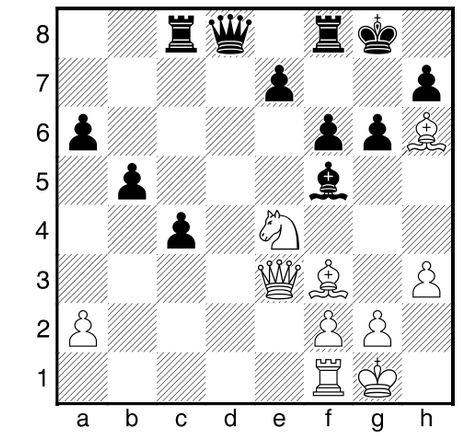
21...♘xd5 22.♗h6



22...♘xc3?
Luring my Queen to the long diagonal was not the best idea. A bit strange, but rather balanced position would arise after:
22...♘b4 23.♘xb5 *(23.♗xf8=)* 23...♘xa2 24.♕e1 ♕b6 25.♘c3 ♘xc3 26.♕e5 f6 27.♕xc3 ♖fd8=, but I would prefer Black here.

23.♕xc3 f6 24.♘e4
24.♗xf8 ♔xf8 25.♘e4 ♗f5 26.♖e1⩲.

24...♗f5 25.♕e3

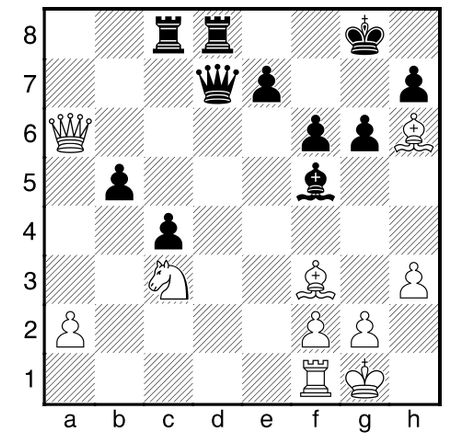


25...♕d3!
25...♖e8 26.♖d1 ♕c7 27.♗f4 ♕a5 28.♘g3 ♗d3 *(28...e5 29.♗g5!!⩲)* 29.♕e6+ ♔g7 30.♗d5±.

26.♕a7 ♕d7!
26...♗xe4 27.♖d1 ♕a3 28.♗xf8 ♖a8 29.♕d7 ♖xf8 30.♗xe4±.

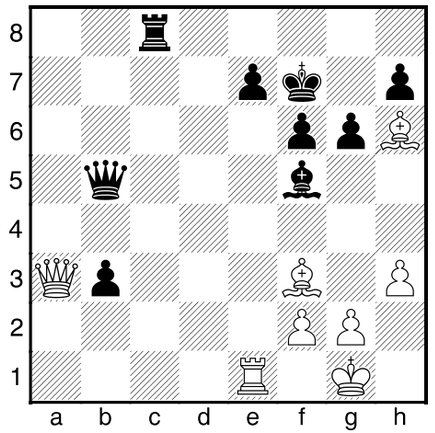
27.♕xa6 ♖fd8
White could still have kept some initiative after: 27...♗xe4!? 28.♗xe4 ♖fd8 29.♖e1 c3 30.♗c2⩲.

28.♘c3



28...b4?
A natural move, but wrong. The less natural 28...♔f7! 29.g4 *(29.♘xb5 c3⇄)* 29...♗d3 30.♖e1 g5 31.h4 would have made our pulses race.

29.♘d5 b3 30.axb3 cxb3 31.♕a3 ♔f7 32.♘b6 ♕b5 33.♘xc8 ♖xc8 34.♖e1



34...♗e6
More tenacious was ***34...♖e8!:***

35.♗e2 ♗d3 36.♗xd3 ♕xd3 37.♗c1 e5 38.♖e3 ♕d1+ 39.♔h2+-;

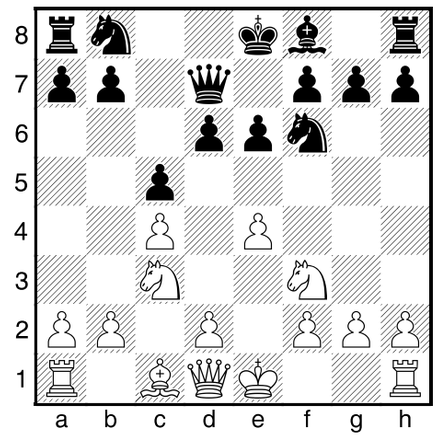
35.♗d1 35...♗e6 36.♖xe6! b2 37.♖xf6+! ♔xf6 38.♕f3+□ ♔e6 39.♗b3+□ ♔d6 40.♕d1+ ♔c6 (40...♔e5?? 41.♗g7+ #1) 41.♕c2+ ♔b7 42.♕xb2+-.

35.♗g4+- f5 36.♕b2 fxg4 37.♕g7+ ♔e8 38.♖xe6 ♕c5 39.♗e3 ♕b4 40.♖b6 ♕e1+ 41.♔h2 g3+ 42.♔xg3 ♕c3 43.♕g8+ ♔d7 44.♕e6+
Black resigned, and our 4-0 score became reality.

1-0

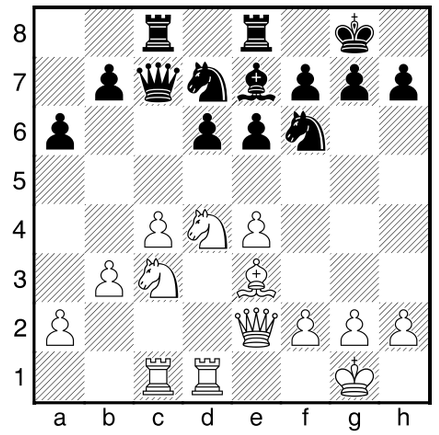
Taher,Yoseph Theolifus (2321)
Kovalyov,Anton (2617)
B52
42nd Olympiad Baku (4.26), 05.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+ ♗d7 4.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 e6



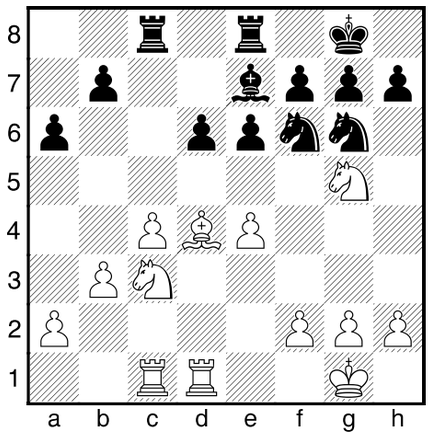
7.d4
7.0-0 ♗e7 8.d4 cxd4 9.♘xd4 0-0 10.♕e2 ♘c6 11.♖d1 *(11.♘xc6!?)* 11...a6 12.b3 ♖ac8 13.♗b2 ♖fd8 14.♘c2 ♕c7 15.♘e3 ♕a5 16.f3 ♘d7 17.♔h1 ♘c5 18.♘cd5 exd5 19.♘xd5 ♗g5 *(19...♗f8 20.b4 ♘xb4 21.♗c3* gets the piece back with a plus.*)* 20.♗c3 ♕a3 21.♗b2 ♕a5 22.b4 *(22.♗c3 ♕a3=)* 22...♘xb4 23.♗c3 ♕a4 24.♗xb4 ♘e6 25.♖ab1 *(25.♕e1! ♖xc4 26.♗a5* and White gets an exchange for the pawn.*)* 25...♘f4 26.♘xf4 ♗xf4 (½-½, 59) Bruzon Batista,L−Ivanchuk,V Havana, 2014.

7...cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♗e7 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 a6 11.♕e2 ♕c7 12.♖ac1 ♘bd7 13.♖fd1 ♖fe8 14.b3 ♖ac8



15.♘f3
15.f3 ♗f8 16.♕d2 ♕a5 17.h3 ♖c7 18.f4 ♖ec8 19.♘f3 *(19.f5!)* 19... b5 20.e5 ♘e8 *(20...dxe5 21.fxe5 ♘e8 22.♘e4 ♕xd2 23.♘exd2=)* 21.♘e4 ♕xd2 22.♗xd2 *(22.♘exd2 d5!)* 22...dxe5 23.♗a5 ♖b7 24.c5 ♘df6 *(24...♘xc5* looks safe.*)* 25.c6 ♖a7 26.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 27.♖d8± (1-0, 59) Anton Guijarro,D (2627)−Gabuzyan,H (2607) Martuni, 2016.

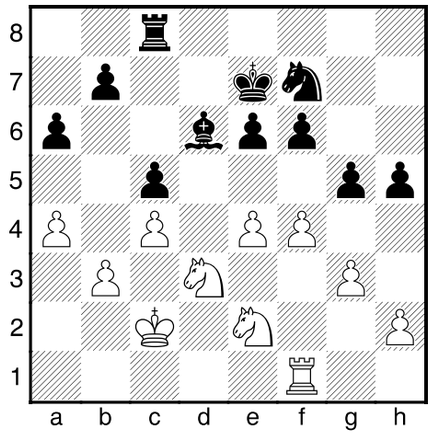
15...♘f8 16.♗d4 ♘g6 17.♕d3 ♕a5 18.♕d2 ♕h5 19.♕g5 ♕xg5 20.♘xg5



A Hedgehog where White plays for a draw is a great test of Black's ability to get the most out of a Sicilian pawn structure.

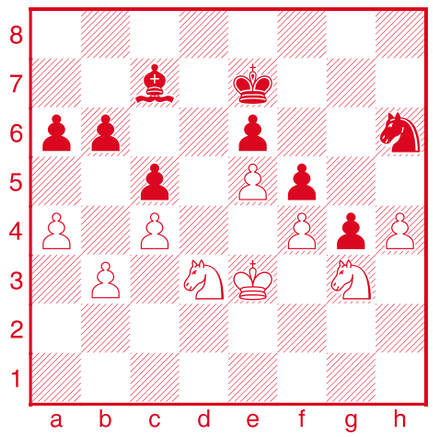
20...♖c6 21.♘f3 ♖ec8 22.a4 ♘d7 23.g3 ♗d8 24.♔f1 ♗a5 25.♔e2 f6 26.♗e3 ♘c5 27.♗xc5 dxc5 28.♔d3 ♔f8 29.♔c2 ♔e8 30.♖d3 ♘h8 31.♖cd1 ♘f7 32.♖d7 ♖6c7 33.♖xc7 ♗xc7 34.♘e2 ♔e7 35.♘e1 g5 36.♘d3 ♗d6

37.f4 h5 38.♖f1



38...♖h8
Black gets to choose which file opens on the kingside.

39.h4 gxh4 40.gxh4 ♖g8 41.♖g1 ♖g4 42.♖xg4 hxg4 43.♔d2 b6 44.♔e3 f5 45.♘g3 ♘h6 46.e5 ♗c7



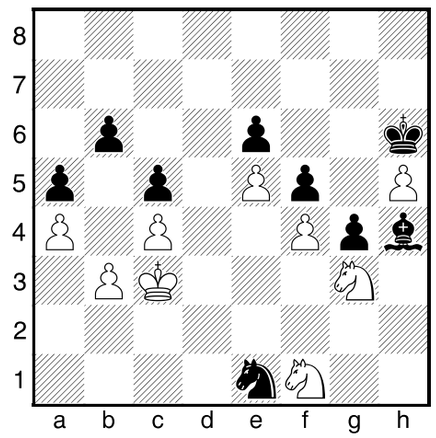
Is this really a Critical Position?

47.♔e2?!
47.b4! gives White's ♘s something to do, and looks like a draw. 47...cxb4 48.♘xb4 a5 49.♘d3 ♔d7 50.c5=.

47...a5
Now White has three pawns to target: b3, f4, and h4.

48.♘f2
48.♘e1 ♔f7 49.♘g2 can Black break through if White keeps the ♘ on g2?

48...♔f7 49.♘fh1 ♗d8 50.h5 ♘g8 51.♘f1 ♘e7 52.♘hg3 ♘c6 53.♔d3 ♘d4 54.♔c3 ♔g7 55.♔b2 ♗h4 56.♔c3 ♔h6 57.♔b2 ♘f3 58.♔c3 ♘e1



59.♘e2
59.♔d2 ♘g2 wins f4, when there will still be three weak pawns to attack.

59...♔xh5 60.♘fg3+ ♔g6 61.♘f1 ♘g2 62.♔d3 ♗f2

0-1

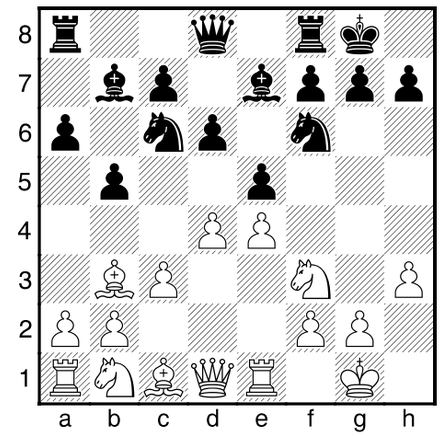
Notes by GM Eric Hansen

Hansen,Eric (2582) Irwanto,Sadikin (2327)

C93
42nd Olympiad Baku (4.27), 05.09.2016

Indonesia was no pushover. My opponent had just come off a win against Luke McShane of England while the three other boards were handled by under-rated Indonesian teenagers.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♗b7 10.d4



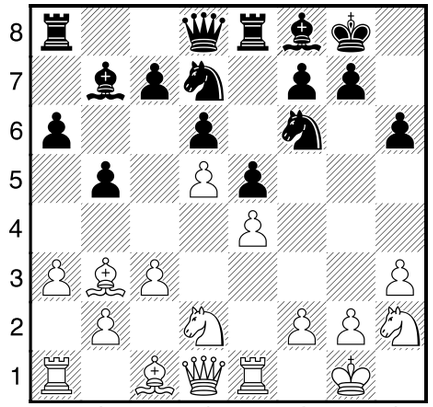
10...h6!?
10...♖e8 Is much more common in the Smyslov.

11.♘bd2 ♖e8 12.a3
I had a specific game I wanted to follow in my preparation and this was an attempt to transpose to it. Standard would be ♘f1-g3 here.

A possible continuation would be: 12.♘f1 ♗f8 13.♘g3 ♘a5 14.♗c2 ♘c4 with many high-level games going b3 or a4.

12...♗f8 13.d5 ♘b8
13...♘a5 or 13...♘e7.

14.♘h2 ♘bd7



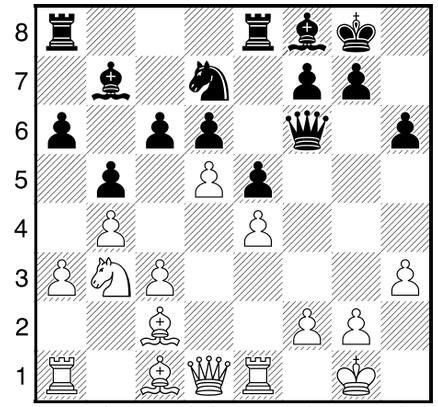
15.♘g4

15.♕f3 a5 16.♘df1 ♘c5 17.♗a2= Van Kampen,R (2636)−Ghaem Maghami,E (2586) Montreal, 2014 (1-0, 63).

15...♘c5

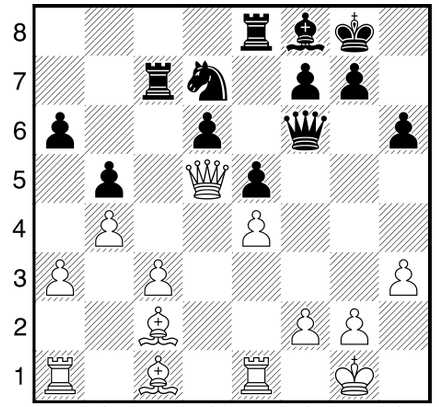
15...♘xg4 16.hxg4 ♘c5 *(16... c6 17.dxc6 ♗xc6 18.♘f1 ♘c5 19.♗d5* With a strategic advantage.*)* 17.♗c2 c6 18.♘f1 cxd5 19.exd5 g6 20.♘g3 ♗g7 21.♗e3±.

16.♗c2 c6 17.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 18.b4 ♘d7 19.♘b3!?



We both had spent no time on our clocks at this point. I was following a game of Adams while I wasn't sure if my opponent was in theory or just playing fast.

19...cxd5 20.♘a5 ♖ab8 21.♘xb7 ♖xb7 22.♕xd5 ♖c7



23.♗d2

The game in question which I wanted to blindly follow was Adams−Matlakov, 2015. I assumed it was a clean win by Adams but it turns out I should have checked the details:

23.♕d3 ♖ec8 24.♗d2 ♘b6 25.a4 ♘c4 26.axb5 axb5 27.♗b3 ♘xd2 28.♕xd2 ♖xc3 29.♖e3 ♖xe3 30.fxe3! ♖c7 31.♗d5± g6 32.♕d3 ♕g5 33.♖f1 h5 34.♖f3 ♕h4 35.♔h2± ♗h6 36.♕xb5 ♔h7 37.♕e8 ♗g7 38.♗xf7 ♖e7 39.♕d8 1-0 Adams,M−Matlakov,M Skopje, 2015.

I challenge the readers to find an energetic improvement that could have been played before White achieved the squeeze.

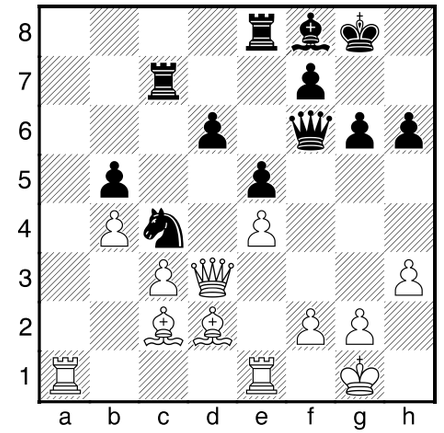
I challenge the readers to find an energetic improvement that could have been played before White achieved the squeeze.

- Eric Hansen

23...♘b6 24.♕d3 ♘c4

Still hoping for a clean transposition into my prep: 24...♖ec8 25.a4 ♘c4 26.axb5 axb5 27.♗b3 ♘xd2 28.♕xd2 ♖xc3 29.♖e3 ♖xe3 30.fxe3 and I'm back to Adams−Matlakov (above).

25.a4 g6 26.axb5 axb5



27.♗b3?

Carelessly played without thinking.

Better is 27.♗e3 ♕e6 *(27... d5? 28.♕xd5 ♘xe3 29.♖xe3 ♖ec8 30.♖f3 ♕c6 31.♗b3±)* 28.♗b3 ♖ec8 29.f3 ♕e8 30.♗f2±.

27...d5!

This obvious move shook me on a few different levels. First

of all, I had just made a poor move to allow this. Secondly, it came to my realization that if my opponent had entered 'my prep' that this resource was probably fully playable and equalizing.
I had expected: 27...♖ec8 28.♗xc4 bxc4 29.♕d5±.

28.♗e3

White had other choices, but none of them inspired:

28.♕xd5?? ♖d8-+.

28.exd5 e4 29.♕c2 ♘xd2 30.♕xd2 ♕xc3 31.♕xc3 ♖xc3 32.♖e3 ♖ec8∓.

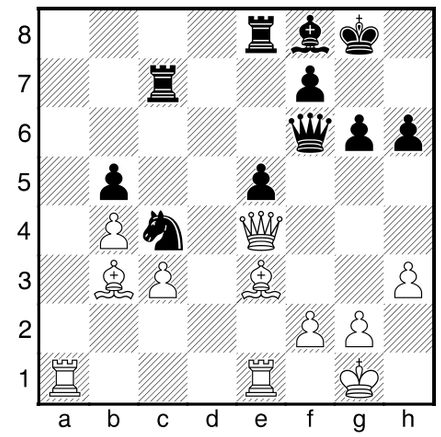
28.♗xc4 dxc4 *(28...bxc4!? 29.♕c2 d4∞)* 29.♕e2 ♖d7 30.♖a5 ♕c6 31.♖ea1 ♖ed8 32.♗e3 ♖d3 33.♕e1 is barely equal.

28...dxe4

Precise was ***28...d4*** 29.cxd4 ♗xb4 30.♖ed1 ♘xe3 *(30...exd4)* 31.fxe3 ♕b6! 32.♗d5 ♗c3=.

28...♘xe3 29.fxe3 dxe4 30.♕xb5 ♖ec8 31.♖f1 ♕g5 32.♖xf7.

29.♕xe4



The hope for a slightly better opposite bishops endgame lives on.

29...♘d6?!

Black had far easier ways to liquidate with equality:
29...♖ec8= is fine, as is
29...♘xe3 30.♖xe3 ♕f5! 31.♕xf5 *(31.♕d5 e4)* 31...gxf5 32.♖f3 f4=.

30.♕d5

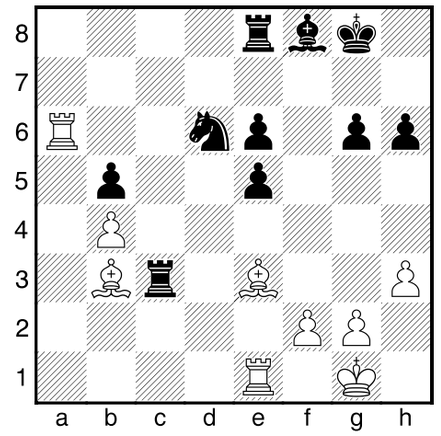
I'm happy to give up a pawn in order to activate my rooks and bishops.

30...♖xc3 31.♖a6 ♕e6

31...♕e7 32.♖xd6 ♖xb3 33.♗c5+-

31...♖d8 32.♗b6 ♖e8 33.♗c5 ♕e6 34.♕xe6 fxe6 35.♖e3 ♖xe3 36.♗xe3 ♔f7 37.♖b6 ♖a8= Black should hold here without a lot of problems, but it isn't pretty.

32.♕xe6 fxe6



Despite being a pawn down, I think only White can be preferred here based on the pawn structure. Now the key is to keep pieces on the board and make life as hard as possible for Black.

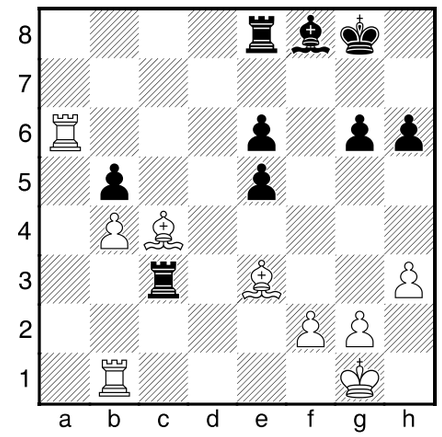
33.♖b1

33.♗c5 would be a quick way to draw.

33...♘c4?!

33...♔g7 and try to get in ...♔f6 and ...♘f5 with active counterplay.

34.♗xc4

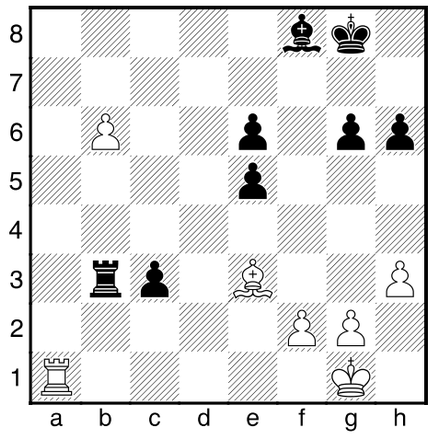


34...♖xc4

Draw offer by Black. I got up from my chair and consulted our captain Victor Plotkin about it, but I knew already what he was going to say...

If you don't like the game variation, then 34.bxc4 needs to be seriously analyzed: ***34...bxc4*** 35.b5 ♖b3 36.♖aa1! *(36.♖xb3? cxb3 37.♖a1 b2 38.♖b1 ♗a3 39.♔f1 ♔f7 40.♔e2 ♖c8 41.b6 g5∓)* 36...♖a8!? *(36...♖b8?! 37.b6±)* 37.b6 *(37.♖xa8 ♖xb1+ 38.♔h2 ♔f7 39.b6 ♗e7 40.♖c8 ♗g5!=)* 37...♖xa1 38.♖xa1 c3

Analysis Diagram



39.♖a7 ♗c5! 40.♗xc5 c2 41.♗e3 ♖xe3 42.fxe3 c1♕+ 43.♔h2 ♕xe3 44.♖a8+ ♔f7 45.b7 ♕f4+ 46.♔g1 ♕c1+=;

39.♔f1 39...♖b2 40.♔e1 (40.♖a7 c2 41.♖c7 ♗d6 42.♖c6 ♗f8 looks nice for White, but I don't see a breakthrough.) 40...c2 41.♖c1 ♗b4+ 42.♔e2 ♔g7 43.♔d3 ♗a5=.

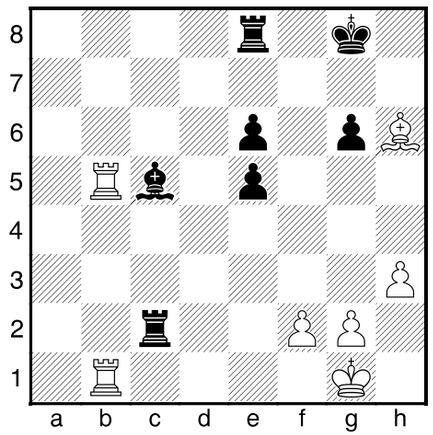
35.♖b6 ♗xb4?!

At this point it's clear that Black is going to suffer a little either way, so he might as well trade pieces and make life a little easier: 35...♖xb4 36.♖xb4 ♗xb4 37.♗xh6 ♗c3 38.♖xb5 ♖a8 39.♔h2 *(39.♖b7 e4 40.♖e7 ♖a6±)* 39...♗d4 40.f3 ♖a2 41.♖b7 e4!=.

36.♗xh6

36.♖xb5 ♗f8 37.♖xe5 ♗g7 38.♖a5 ♖e7=.

36...♗c5 37.♖6xb5 ♖c2



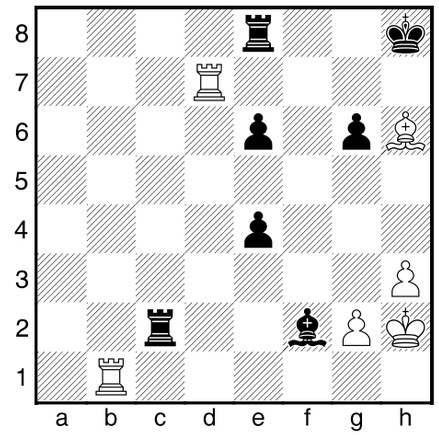
38.♖b7!

I'm happy with this move as an attempt to complicate things.

38.♗e3 ♗xe3 39.fxe3 ♖f8 40.♖xe5 ♖ff2 41.♖g5 ♔g7 42.♖b4 ♖f5 43.♖gg4 g5 I've analyzed this endgame a bit more and I just don't see anything. Of course, I can always push forever.

38...♖xf2

38...♗xf2+ 39.♔h2 e4 *(39...♗d4 40.♖g7+ ♔h8 41.♖d7 ♗b2 42.♖b7 ♗d4 43.♗g7+ ♔g8 44.♗f6 ♖f2 45.♖g7+ ♔f8 46.♖xg6 ♔f7 47.♖h6±)* 40.♖g7+ ♔h8 41.♖d7 *Analysis Diagram*



41...♗h4□ This move escaped me during the game. Black is lost otherwise. Now:

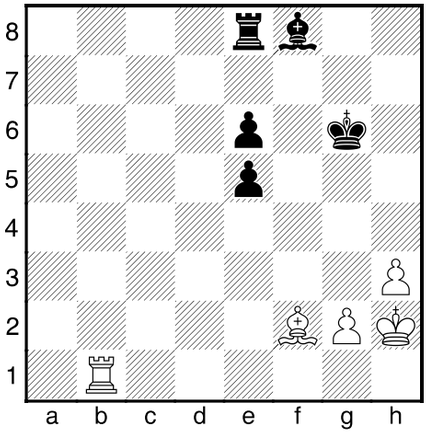
42.♗g7+ ♔g8 *43.♗e5 ♗e7 44.♖bb7 ♖c5! 45.♗b2 ♗f8 46.♖h7 ♖h5=.*

42.♖bb7 ♗f6 43.♗g7+ ♗xg7 44.♖xg7 e3 45.♖xg6 e2 46.♖b1 *(46.♖h6+* and White can force a draw.*)* 46...e5 47.♖g3 ♔h7 48.♖e1 ♔h6 49.♖e3 ♔g5 50.g3 e4 51.♖3xe2 ♖xe2+ 52.♖xe2 ♔f6 53.g4 ♔e5 54.♔g2= Black's king and pawn are too fast.

39.♖g7+

39.♔h2?! ♖f7=.

39...♔h8 40.♔h2 ♗f8 41.♖xg6 ♔h7 42.♗e3 ♔xg6 43.♗xf2



After a more−or−less forced sequence, I was quite happy to achieve this, since the connected passers guarantee some winning chances. I was also looking forward to redeeming myself after spoiling a winning endgame against Short.

43...♗h6?!

From this point on my opponent starts to falter badly. The endgame should be a draw with precise play, which starts by activating the ♖: ***43...♖c8!*** 44.♖b2 *(44.♖e1 ♖c4! 45.♗g3 e4*

46.♖e2 ♗c5=) 44...e4 45.g4 ♖c4 46.♔g2 ♗e7 47.♖e2 *(47.♗e3 ♗h4=)* 47...♗d6 48.h4 e3 49.h5+ ♔h7=.

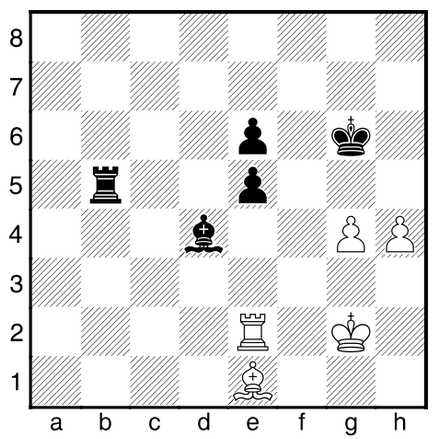
44.♖e1 ♗d2

44...♖f8 45.♔g1 *(45.♗g3 ♗f4 46.♗xf4 exf4 47.♖xe6+ ♔f5* is yet another endgame that he can hold.*)* 45...♔f5 *(45...♗g7 46.g4 ♖a8 47.♖e2 ♖a3 48.♔g2 ♖a4 49.♗g3 e4 50.h4±)* 46.g4+ ♔f6 47.♗h4+ ♔f7 48.♖xe5±.

45.♖e2 ♗c3

45...♗f4+ 46.g3±.

46.g4 ♖d8 47.♗g3 ♖d5 48.♔g2 ♗d4 49.h4 ♖b5 50.♗e1



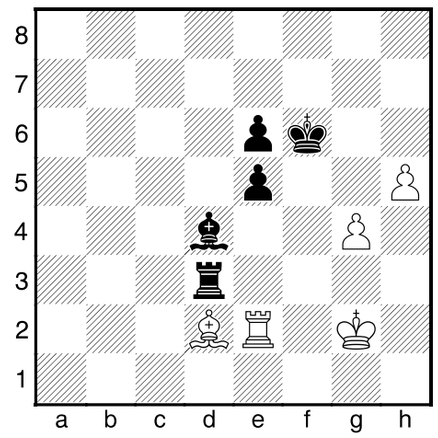
Ideally, I want to trade off the rooks and bring my king to e4. There is no real way to force that, so White's goal is to carefully nurture the two passers while avoiding any tricks.

50...♖b3 51.♗d2

Transferring the bishop to a better diagonal.

51...♖d3 52.h5+ ♔f6

52...♔g7 53.g5 e4 54.♗c1 A textbook−like defence would be 54...♖d1 *(54...e3?! 55.♔f3±)* 55.♖xe4 e5! 56.♗e3 ♖e1 57.♔f2 *(57.♔f3 ♖f1+ 58.♔g4 ♖e1 59.♖xd4 exd4 60.♗xd4+ ♔h7=)* 57...♖h1 58.♗xd4 exd4 59.h6+ ♔g6= and it looks good, but there's no way to progress.



53.♗h6!

Cutting the king off slowly but surely.

During the game I thought 53.g5 was hasty: ***53.g5+*** ♔f5 54.g6 e4 55.♗h6 *(But here I totally missed... 55.♗e3!! ♗a1 (55...♗xe3 56.g7+-) 56.♖f2+ ♔g4 57.h6+-)* 55...♔g4 56.g7 ♖g3+ 57.♔h2 ♖h3+ 58.♔g2 ♖g3+=.

53...♖d1

editor − 53...♖c3!? 54.♖e1 ♖c2+ 55.♔f3 ♖c3+ 56.♔e4 ♖g3 57.g5+ ♖xg5 58.♗xg5+ ♔xg5 59.♖h1 ♔h6+- The white ♔ goes to g4 and the ♖ flushes out the blockader. If the pawn was on h6 and the Black ♔ on h7 it would be a Lomonosov tablebase draw.

54.♔h2

54.♔f3 deserved a lot of attention as well.

I decided against 54.g5+ ♔f5 55.g6 ♖g1+ *(55...e4 56.♗e3+-)* 56.♔h2 e4 57.♖d2□+- I once again missed this move. Nothing else is enough:

57.♖g2 ♖xg2+ 58.♔xg2 ♔g4=;

57.g7 ♖g4 58.♔h3 ♖g1 59.♖g2 ♖h1+ 60.♔g3 ♗e5+ 61.♔f2 ♗xg7 62.♗xg7 ♖xh5=.

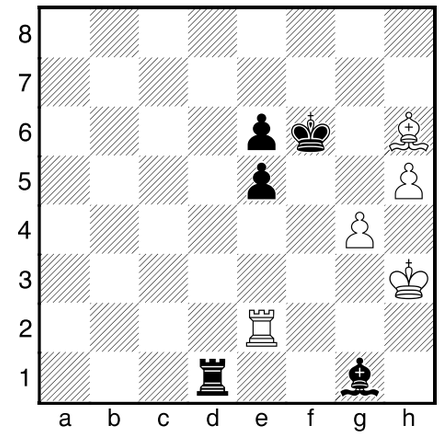
54...♗g1+

54...♖g1 55.♖g2±.

55.♔g3 ♗d4 56.♔h2

56.g5+ ♔f5 57.g6 e4.

56...♗g1+ 57.♔h3



57...♖d3+?

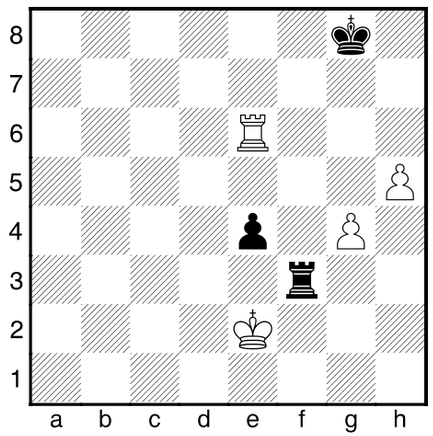
Black forgot he was supposed to repeat. This time, after 57...♗d4 I was going to march to e4 58.♔g2 ♖g1+ 59.♔f3±.

58.♔g2 ♗d4

58...♖d1 59.♖d2 ♖b1 60.g5+ ♔f5 61.g6 ♔f6 62.♖d7+-.

59.♖e1+-
Getting rid of Black's back−rank counterplay. The other main benefit is now my rook gets access to f1, and with that my pawns roll way too fast.

59...♔e7 60.♗g5+ ♔f7 61.♖f1+ ♔g8 62.♖f6 e4 63.♖xe6 ♗e3 64.♗xe3 ♖xe3 65.♔f2 ♖f3+ 66.♔e2



66...♖g3
66...♖f4 67.♖g6+ ♔h7 68.♔e3 ♖f1 69.♔xe4+-.

67.♖xe4 ♔f7 68.♔f2 ♖a3 69.♖e3 ♖a4 70.♔g3 ♔f6 71.♖f3+ ♔g7 72.♔h4 ♖a5 73.♖b3 ♖a7 74.♖b6
74.♖b6 ♖a1 75.♖b7+ ♔g8 76.h6 ♔h8 77.g5 ♔g8 78.g6 ♖a4+ 79.♔g5 ♖a5+ 80.♔f4 ♖a4+ 81.♔e3 ♖a3+ 82.♔d4 ♖a8 83.♖d7 ♖e8 84.♔d5 ♔h8 85.♔d6 ♖a8 86.♔e7+-.

It doesn't feel good to blitz out 25 moves of preparation and get an uncomfortable position with White. Yet my opponent relaxed far too much after the opening and I was satisfied with the pressure I put on in the later stages of the game.

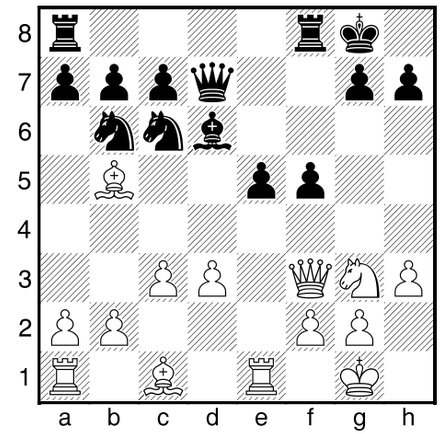
1-0

Pasaribu,IMP (1860) Krnan,Tomas (2430)

C55
42nd Olympiad Baku (4.28), 05.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

For the first 25 moves Black gets nothing against his U1900 opponent. Then he gets a huge present on move 30.

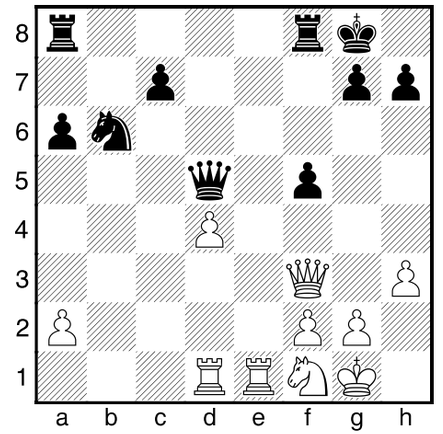
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 0-0 6.0-0 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.♖e1 ♗g4 9.♘bd2 ♘b6 10.♗b5 ♗d6 11.h3 ♗h5 12.♘e4 f5 13.♘g3 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 ♕d7



15.♘f1
15.d4 exd4 16.♗xc6 ½-½ Smirin,I (2676)−Melkumyan,H (2640) Warsaw, 2016.

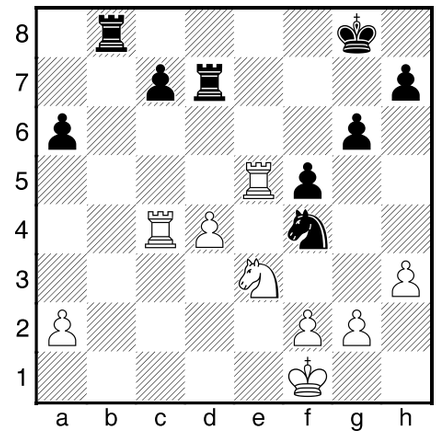
15.a4 a6 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.c4 ♖ab8 18.a5 ♘c8 19.c5 ♗xc5 20.♖xe5 ♗d4 21.♖e1 ♘d6 (0-1, 34) Wei,Y (2714)−Vidit,S (2648) Abu Dhabi, 2016.

15...a6 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♗e3 c5 18.♖ad1 ♕a4 19.b4 ♕a3 20.bxc5 ♗xc5 21.♗xc5 ♕xc5 22.d4 exd4 23.cxd4 ♕d5



24.♕xd5+
24.♕e2± when Black's pawns are a teeny bit loose.

24...♘xd5 25.♖e5 ♖ad8 26.♖c1 ♖d7 27.♖c4 g6 28.♘e3 ♘f4 29.♔f1 ♖b8=



30.g3?? ♖b1+

0-1

On the Podium

Every round, the top 10 matches are played on a podium – a slightly elevated area in the center of the playing hall. Stronger teams played almost all of their games on the podium, and lower ranked teams were able to visit this area from time to time. After a short visit in the 3rd round against England, we got another opportunity to play on the podium in round 5 against Cuba. Honestly, we did not expect to spend the rest of the Olympiad on the podium.

Round 5: Canada 3 - Cuba 1

The scenario for this match was very similar to the matches when we were playing with board one as Black against a strong team. From the opening, we got the advantage on our "White" boards (2 and 4), while our opponents tried to use the White colour on board 1 and 3 to their advantage. Quite quickly Anton and Eric won their games, but Evgeny lost to Dominguez, who had a very strong tournament.

The score was 2-1 and Alex was able to fully equalize with Black on board 3. His opponent was not satisfied with a draw because he realized his team would lose, so he tried to find some chances for victory. Unfortunately for him, the position remained equal. Actually, it was Alex who had more reasons to play for a win. After about 20 moves without any progress, Alex offered a draw. It's a team event, so of course his opponent declined, but a few moves later the Cuban made a serious positional blunder. Ortiz offered a draw, but it was too late. Alex played very well in what transpired to be a winning endgame, thus achieving an important win for our team.

Alex's game was one of the longest in this round. Obviously, he was very tired. As soon as the game ended, Alex went to me and said: "What a relief". He said this not only because he beat a higher-rated opponent in a crucial situation, but he was able to prove all of his doubters wrong — the doubters who had questioned the choice made by the Selection Committee. His performance in this tournament was the best reply to everyone who posted negative comments about him. Alex really wanted to prove that he is still able to play good chess, and he did.

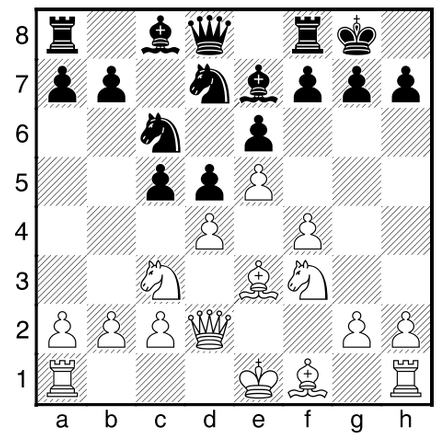
There was a day-off after round 5, and I got an opportunity to evaluate our situation. The team had played fantastically so far. The strategy of giving Eric the White pieces definitely helped us. The team chemistry was great, much better than 2 years or 4 years ago. The only thing that did not meet my expectation was the pairings. Usually, more individual points leads to easier pairings. However, we got strong opponents at the +2 level: both England and Cuba. I hoped that the chess gods would be more friendly with our pairings in the second half of the tournament.

- Victor Plotkin

Dominguez,Leinier (2720)
Bareev,Evgeny (2675)
C11
42nd Olympiad Baku (5.37), 06.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

Leinier Dominguez is one of the best attacking players in the world. At the Baku Olympiad he won the silver medal on board 1.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 ♗e7 8.♕d2 0-0



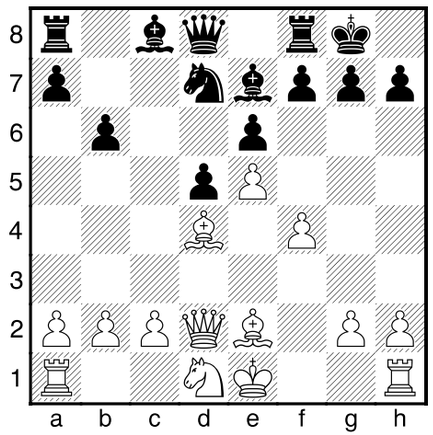
9.♗e2
9.dxc5 ♘xc5 10.0-0-0 a6 11.♕f2 b6 12.♘d4 ♕c7 13.♔b1 ♗b7 14.♘xc6 ♗xc6 15.♗d4 ♗b7 16.♗d3 b5 17.♘e2 b4 18.♘g3 ♖ac8 19.f5 f6∞ 20.exf6 ♗xf6

21.♗xc5 (½-½, 36) So,W−Nakamura,H US Ch., 2016.

9...b6 10.♘d1

Preparing c2-c3, which would leave Black struggling to create queenside or central play. Black now trades on d4 since the ♘d1 is a long way from being able to occupy d4.

10...cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♘xd4 12.♗xd4



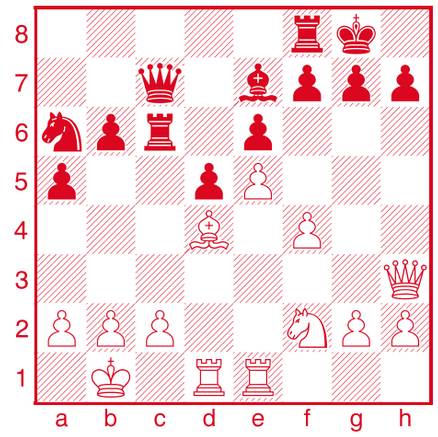
12...♘c5

12...♘b8! prepares both ...♗a6 and ...♘c6. 13.♘e3 ♘c6 14.c3 b5!? 15.0-0 *(15.♗xb5?? ♘xd4 16.♕xd4□ ♖b8∓)* 15...b4 16.♗d3 bxc3 17.bxc3 ♗d7 18.♘g4 ♘xd4 19.cxd4 g6 20.♖ab1 ♖b8 21.h3 ½-½ Quesada Perez,Y (2634)−Chandra,A (2489) Greensboro, 2016.

13.♘f2 a5 14.0-0-0

14.0-0 ♗a6 15.♗xa6 ♖xa6 16.♕e2 ♖a8 17.♖ad1 ♕c7 18.c3 ♕c6 19.♘g4 ♘e4 20.f5 exf5 21.♖xf5 ♖ae8 22.♖df1∞ White's pieces look menacing, but the ♘e4 is a good defender; Quesada Perez,Y (2645)−Matamoros Franco,C (2525) Montevideo, 2015 (1-0, 39).

14...♗a6 15.♗g4 ♖c8 16.♔b1 ♖c6 17.♖he1 ♕d7 18.♕e3 ♕c7 19.♕h3 ♗c8 20.♗e2 ♗a6 21.♗g4 ♗c8 22.♗e2 ♗a6 23.♗xa6 ♘xa6



The pawn structure is typical for opposite side castling attacks in the French (and Scheveningen Sicilian), but the piece exchanges, particularly the light−square ♗s, should favour Black.

What should White do about the attack on c2?

24.♘g4!?

White ignores the attack on c2 and launches his own. It is a rich position, and White has choices:

24.♗c3?! gives Black a nice choice between ...b5 and ...♗b4, with the initiative in either case.

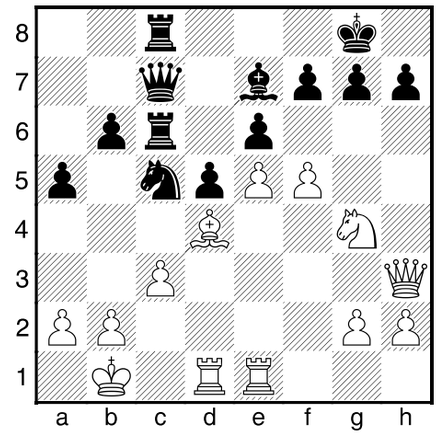
24.f5!? exf5 25.♕xf5 ♕c8! 26.♕f3 ♖xc2!? 27.♗c3 ♘b4 defending the ♖ and threatening ....♕c4, 28.a3 ♗c5! with a complex position.

24.c3!? this unnecessarily gives Black a lever with .... b5-b4, though White does not seem to be worse in the complications: 24...♘c5 *(24...b5 25.♖d3 b4 26.♖g3→)* 25.g4 b5 26.f5 ♖b8 27.f6 ♗f8□ 28.fxg7 ♗xg7 29.g5↑ b4 30.c4! a pseudo−pawn sac to close the c−file. 30...♘e4 *(30...dxc4?? 31.♘g4+-)* 31.♘g4 ♖xc4 32.♘f6+ ♔f8□ 33.♕xh7 ♘c3+□ 34.bxc3□ bxc3+∞.

24...♖c8

24...♖xc2?! 25.♘f6+! ♗xf6□ *(25...gxf6 26.♕g4+ ♔h8 27.exf6* is mating.*)* 26.exf6 ♖c8 27.f5→.

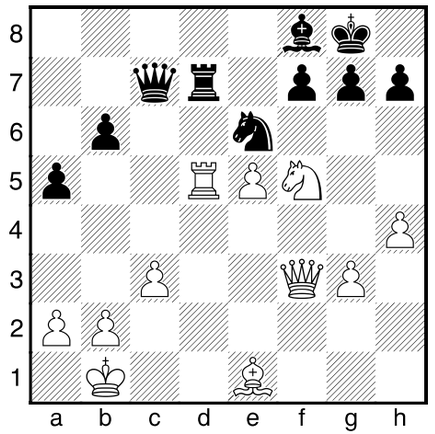
25.c3 ♘c5 26.f5



26...exf5?!

26...♗f8! 27.f6 *(27.fxe6 fxe6=)* 27...g6 looks scary, but how does White break through?

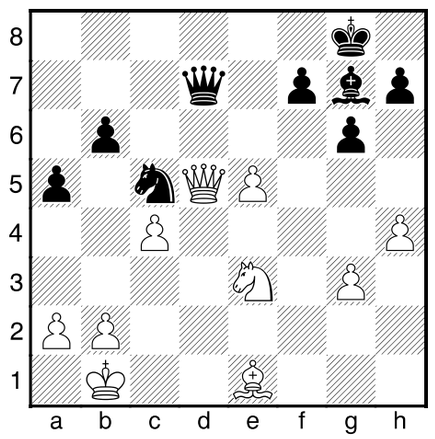
27.♘e3! ♖d8 28.♘xf5 ♗f8 29.♕f3 ♘e6 30.♗f2 ♘g5 31.♕d3 ♖d7 32.h4 ♘e6 33.♕f3 ♖c4 34.g3 ♖e4 35.♖xd5 ♖xe1+ 36.♗xe1



36...g6
36...♕c6 37.c4□ g6 38.♕d1! ♖xd5 39.cxd5 ♕c4 *(39...♕d7? 40.♘e3+-)* 40.dxe6 ♕e4+ 41.♔a1 gxf5!±.

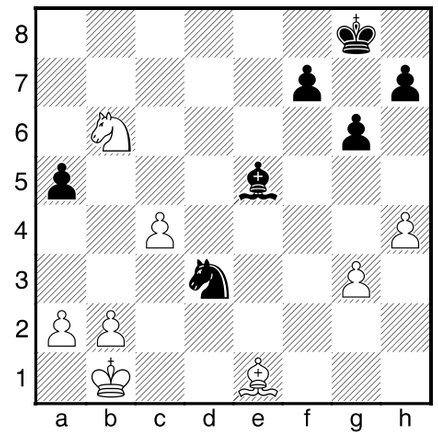
37.♘e3 ♗g7
37...♖xd5 38.♕xd5 ♗g7 39.♘c4±.

38.♖xd7 ♕xd7 39.♕d5 ♘c5 40.c4



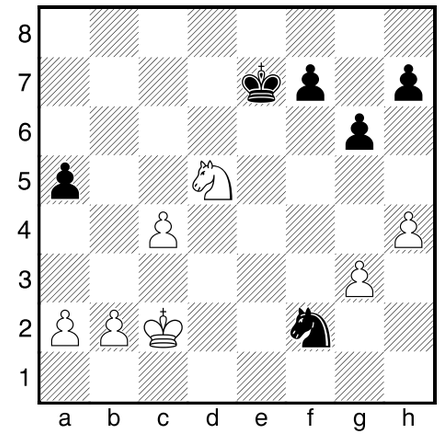
40...♕xd5?!
40...♕e8 41.♗c3 ♘d7± Δ42.♘g4 h5 43.♘f6+ ♘xf6 44.exf6 ♗xf6! 45.♗xf6 ♕e1+ 46.♔c2 ♕f2+=.

41.♘xd5 ♗xe5 42.♘xb6 ♘d3



43.♘d7
43.♗xa5 seems to win for White, but it's sensible not to go into a race when you can keep your one pawn advantage. 43...♘xb2 *(43...♗xg3 44.♔c2 ♘c5 45.b4 ♘e6 46.♘d5 ♗xh4 47.c5+-)* 44.♔c2 f5 45.♗c3 ♗xc3 46.♔xc3 ♘d1+ 47.♔d4+-.

43...♗c7 44.♘f6+ ♔f8 45.♘d5 ♘xe1 46.♘xc7 ♔e7 47.♔c1 ♘d3+ 48.♔c2 ♘f2 49.♘d5+



49...♔e6
49...♔d6 50.♔b3±.

50.♘c3
50.♔b3!

50...♔e5 51.c5 f5 52.a3 a4 53.b4 axb3+ 54.♔xb3 ♔e6 55.♔c4 h6 56.♔b5 g5 57.hxg5 hxg5 58.c6
58.c6 ♘d3 59.c7 ♔d7 60.♔b6 ♔c8 61.♘b5+-.

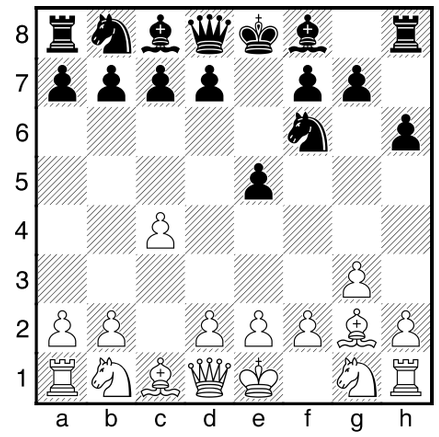
1-0

Kovalyov,Anton (2617)
Bruzon,Lazaro (2623)

A20
42nd Olympiad Baku (5.38), 06.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

Bruzon has been above 2700 more than once. Here, he tries to bully White with a pawn sac; Anton coolly consolidates then begins his own attack.

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 h6



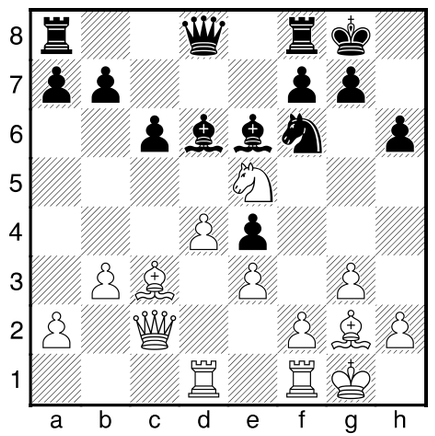
Does 3 ...h6 look ridiculous?

This not a fast 1.e4 e5 opening where Black can get blown off the board. In fact, all of White's moves so far have been about attacking the light squares on the

queenside, so slightly weakening the kingside light squares is hardly a problem. 3...h6 is a semi−useful waiting move which helps Black decide where to put his f8-Bishop, and even Carlsen has played this against Kramnik.

4.b3 ♗c5 5.♘c3N
5.e3 0-0 6.♗b2 ♖e8 7.♘e2 d5 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.0-0 ♘c6 10.a3 ♗f8 11.d3 ♗e6 12.♘d2 ♕d7 13.♕c2 ♗h3 14.♖fd1 ♖ad8 15.♘f3 ♕g4 (½- ½, 70) Gurevich,M−Anand,V Bastia, 2002.

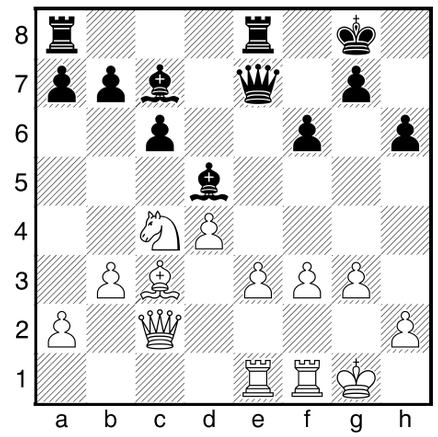
5...♘c6 6.e3 d5 7.♘xd5 ♘xd5 8.cxd5 ♘b4 9.d3 ♘xd5 10.♘f3 ♗b4+ 11.♗d2 ♗d6 12.d4 e4 13.♘e5 ♘f6 14.♕c2 0-0 15.♗c3 ♗e6 16.♖d1 c6 17.0-0



17...♖e8?
An unnecessary pawn sac.
⌓17...♗f5 and if 18.f3 exf3 19.♕xf5 fxg2 20.♔xg2 ♕c8 21.♕xc8 ♖axc8 with equality, and possibly some play against White's center, e.g. 22.♖xf6?! gxf6 23.♘d7 ♖fd8 24.♘xf6+ ♔g7 25.♖f1 ♗e7∓.

18.♗xe4! ♘xe4 19.♕xe4 f6 20.♕c2! ♕e7
20...fxe5? 21.dxe5 did Black sac the pawn because he missed this? I doubt it, since it is a common enough tactic: 21...♗d5 22.exd6 ♕xd6 23.e4 ♕g6 24.f3±.

21.♘c4 ♗d5 22.♖de1! ♗c7 23.f3



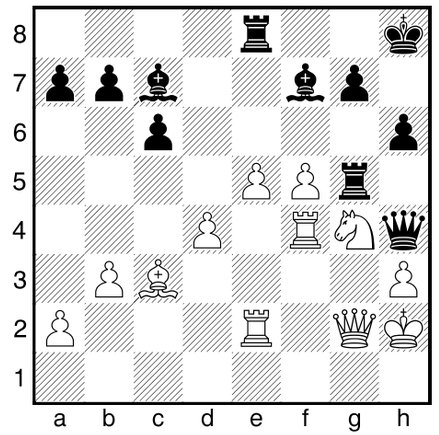
Here come the pawns. Compare this position with those at moves 30, 37, and 42.

23...♕e6 24.♘b2 f5 25.♘d3 ♕g6 26.♘e5 ♕h5 27.♕g2 ♖ad8 28.g4 fxg4 29.♘xg4
29.♕xg4 ♕xg4+ 30.♘xg4 c5 31.dxc5 *(31.♘e5 cxd4 32.exd4 ♖c8)* 31...♗c6⩱.

29...♖d6 30.e4 ♗f7 31.f4! ♖g6 32.h3 ♕h4 33.♖e2
33.f5 is good too.

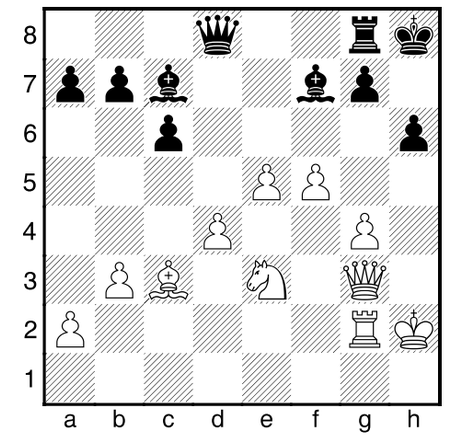
33...♗b6
There's no way to capitalize on the pinned ♘g4: 33...h5 34.f5 ♖g5 35.♗e1+-.

34.f5 ♖g5 35.♖f4 ♔h8 36.♔h2 ♗c7 37.e5



37...♖h5
37...♗d5 38.♕f2 ♕h5 39.♗b4+- to play ♗d6 and start pushing the e−pawn.

38.♕g3 ♕d8 39.♖g2 ♖g8 40.♘e3 ♖g5 41.♖g4 ♖xg4 42.hxg4+-

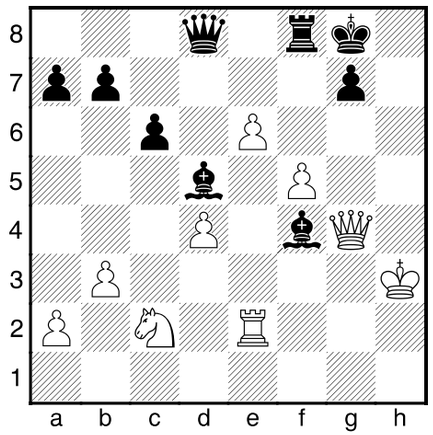


White is completely winning as there's no way to undermine his pawn mass.

42...♕g5
42...c5? 43.d5 ♗xd5 44.♖d2+- gets another piece.

43.♗d2 ♕d8 44.♗c3 ♕g5 45.♘c2 ♗d5 46.♗d2 ♕d8 47.♖e2 ♖f8 48.♗f4 ♔g8 49.♔h3 h5 50.e6 hxg4+
Now White gets to attack on the g−file too.

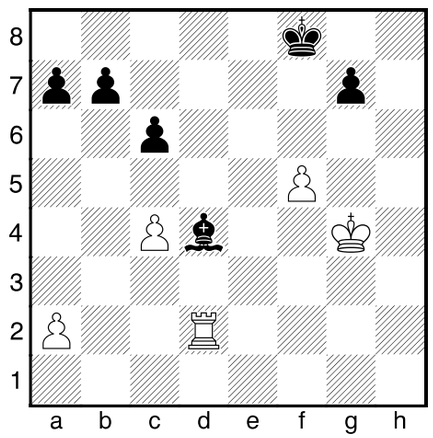
51.♕xg4 ♗xf4



52.e7 ♕d6 53.♕g6
53.e8♕ also wins.

53...♗f7
53...♕xg6 54.exf8♕+ ♔xf8 55.fxg6+-.

54.♕xd6 ♗xd6 55.exf8♕+ ♔xf8 56.♔g4 ♗c7 57.♘e3 ♗b6 58.♘c4 ♗xc4 59.bxc4 ♗xd4 60.♖d2



White lets the fish wriggle on the line before reeling him in.

60...c5 61.♖e2 ♔f7 62.♔f4 ♗f6 63.♖e1 ♗c3 64.♖b1 b6 65.♖b3 ♗b4 66.♔e5 ♗e1 67.♖a3 ♗a5 68.♖xa5! bxa5 69.♔d5 ♔f6 70.♔xc5 ♔e5 71.a4 ♔xf5 72.♔d6
Calm and sound play from White to convert an unwise pawn sac by Black. With the win, Anton goes to 4/4!

1-0

One of the best games in my career, especially if judged with aesthetics in mind.

- Eric Hansen

Notes by GM Eric Hansen

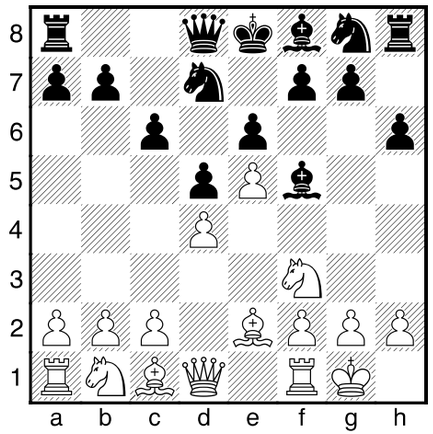
Hansen,Eric (2582)
Gonzalez Vidal,Y (2553)
B12
42nd Olympiad Baku (5.10), 06.09.2016

editor:
The following game is, IMHO, The Canadian game of the Olympiad. Hansen plays an exchange sac, followed by a pawn sac, followed by a series of quiet moves while ignoring his opponent's desperate offers of pieces, before dominating Black's minors and going for mate.

1.e4 c6
Already a big surprise − one which I was absolutely not prepared for. My opponent rarely plays the Caro and, besides that, I have quite a reasonable score against the Caro. For someone whose job was presumably to

hold with Black this seemed like a riskier and more provocative choice.

2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.♘f3 e6 5.♗e2 ♘d7 6.0-0 h6

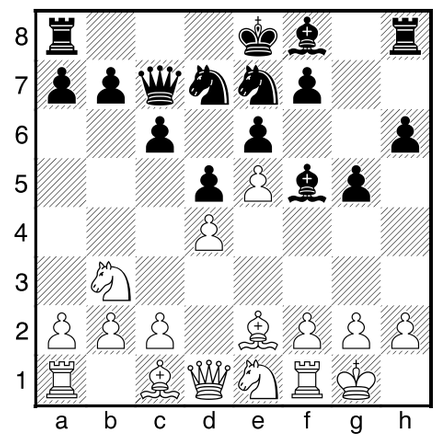


The advance variation allows a lot of options for both sides, which makes for a pretty interesting struggle. A slow move such as 6... h6 is completely playable. Usually it prepares g5 or makes room for the bishop to retreat to h7.

7.♘bd2 ♘e7 8.♘b3 g5!?
This aggressive line justified the decision to enter this opening. I not only have zero experience in this variation but I also could not remember a thing.

9.♘e1
Potentially rerouting the knight to d3 and also opening up the possibility of f4. 9.♗d2 ♕c7.

9...♕c7



10.♗h5
Played after a thirty minute think. The alternatives didn't look great to me and I wanted to avoid preparation. The only thing I could really understand was that if Black could queenside castle then he can follow up with ...f6 and get great counterplay. My move tries to buy some time.

10.♘d3 ♘g6 11.♗d2 Here is another example of Black's decent chances in this line *(11.♗g4 ♗xg4 12.♕xg4 c5 13.♘bxc5 ♗xc5 14.dxc5 ♘xc5 15.♘xc5 ♕xc5 16.♗e3 ♕c7=* Vachier Lagrave,M − Rodshtein,M Drancy FRA 2016*)* 11...0-0-0 12.a4 f6 13.exf6 ♗d6↑ Antipov,M−Rambaldi,F Khanty−Mansiysk, 2015.

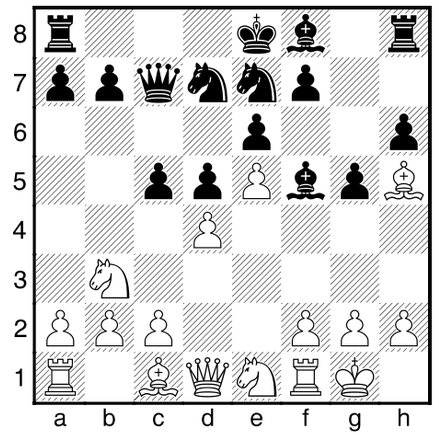
10.f4 0-0-0! *(10...gxf4?! 11.♗xf4 0-0-0 12.♘d3 ♘g6 13.♗g3±)* 11.fxg5 (11.♘d3 ♘g6 12.fxg5 *(12.♗g4 ♗xd3 13.cxd3 gxf4 14.♗xf4 ♘xf4 15.♖xf4 f5 16.♗h5 ♘f6∓* Black was comfortable in Nakamura,H−Shankland,S Saint Louis 2015*)* 12...hxg5 13.♗xg5 f6→) 11...hxg5 12.♗xg5 f6→ is too easy for Black.

10...c5!
Energetic and correct. Everything else leads to a comfortable space advantage for White:

10...♘g6? 11.g4+-;

10...♗g6 11.♘d3 0-0-0 12.f4 gxf4 13.♘xf4±;

10...♖h7 looked wrong to me because of the natural continuation 11.f4 0-0-0 12.fxg5 hxg5 13.♗xg5 f6 14.exf6 and I thought this was good for White because I've artificially stopped the tactics against h2. However, the computer thinks Black has great compensation and counterplay after 14.♘g8!



11.f4
At this point we were both already spending a lot of time on the clock in what unfamiliar territory to us and where natural moves are mistakes, e.g. 11.♗e3? cxd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xe5 13.f4 ♘c4∓.

While 10.♗h5 is very rare, it turns out it has still been played at the top level recently:
11.c3 ♗g7 12.f4 c4 13.♘d2 gxf4 14.♘df3 ♘g6 15.♗xg6 fxg6 16.♘h4 0-0 (16...♗e4 17.♕g4 ♘f8 18.♖xf4→) 17.♖xf4!? g5 18.♘xf5! gxf4 19.♘xg7 ♔xg7

20.♕g4+ ♔h7 21.♕xe6 ♘b6∞ Anand,V−Giri,A Shamkir, 2015 (½-½, 40).

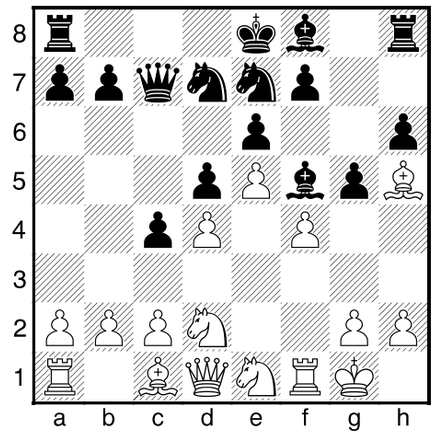
The variation I was worried about when contemplating ***11.c3*** was: ***11...c4*** 12.♘d2 ♗g7 13.♘c2 0-0 14.♘e3 ♗d3 15.♗e2 ♗g6 my pieces looked too clumsy for my liking, though the computer says White's a bit better.

11...c4

Imprecise is ***11...cxd4*** 12.♘xd4 gxf4 13.♗xf4 ♗g7 *(13...♘xe5 14.♕e2 ♗g7 15.♘d3 ♗xd3 16.cxd3 0-0 17.♔h1!+-* Pin to win *17...♕d6 18.♖ae1 f6 19.♗g4! f5! 20.♗h5)* 14.♘xf5 ♘xf5 15.♘d3 ♘xe5 16.g4 ♕b6+ 17.♔h1 ♘e3 18.♕e2 ♘xf1 19.♘xe5+-.

I spent serious time calculating the consequences of ***11...♗g7*** 12.g4! ♗g6 13.♗xg6 fxg6 14.fxg5 cxd4 15.gxh6 ♗xh6 16.♗xh6 ♖xh6 17.♕d2 g5 18.♘f3± I was ready to go for this as White but some caution is still required to handle the delicate position of the king.

12.♘d2

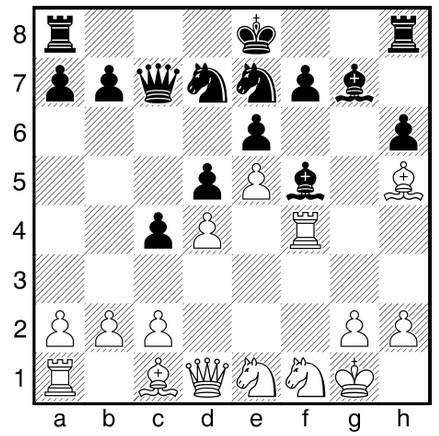


12...gxf4

12...♗g7 13.g4 ♗g6 14.♗xg6 ♘xg6 *(14...fxg6 15.fxg5 h5 16.gxh5 ♖xh5 17.♘df3 0-0-0 18.♘g2±)* 15.f5 ♘gxe5!? 16.fxe6 *(16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.fxe6 ♕b6+! 18.♔h1 ♕xe6∞)* 16...fxe6 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♕e2± Black has come comp, but I don't think it's enough.

Last year, Sjugirov played the correct sequence, which disallows what I managed to achieve during this game: ***12...♕b6!*** 13.♘df3 gxf4 14.♗xf4 ♘g6 15.♗g3 ♗g7 16.♔h1 0-0 17.♕c1 f6 Black comfortably took over with his active position in Nakar,E−Sjugirov,S Jerusalem, 2015.

13.♖xf4 ♗g7 14.♘f1



This knight has two available squares while the other only has f3, so deciding how to activate my knights seemed obvious. My opponent tanked a lot before playing his next move after finding out what I had in mind. He wanted to castle kingside and rush ...f6 before seeing...

14...♕b6

14...0-0 15.♘e3 f6 16.♘xf5 ♘xf5 17.♖xf5 exf5 18.e6+- This is a better version of what was achieved in the game as I retain the e−pawn.

15.♘e3 0-0 16.♘f3 f6?

The logical break in many of these positions, but also the losing one.

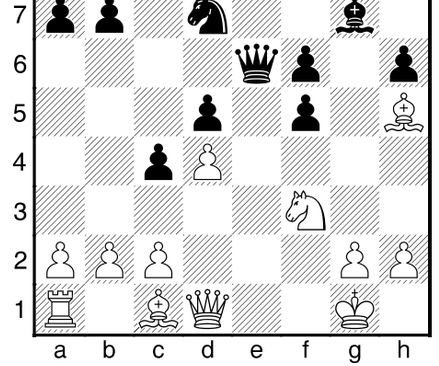
16...♗g6 17.♖h4! with ♘g4 coming up next. 17...f6 *(17...♘f5 18.♖h3 ♘xe3 19.♗xe3 ♕xb2 20.♗xg6 fxg6 21.♖b1 ♕a3 22.♘h4+-)* 18.♘g4 fxe5 19.♗xg6 ♘xg6 20.♘xh6+ ♗xh6 21.♖xh6+-

Superior is ***16...♗e4*** 17.c3 f6∞.

17.♘xf5 ♘xf5

17...exf5 18.e6 ♕xe6 19.♘h4+-.

18.♖xf5! exf5 19.e6! ♕xe6



Here we have a position where Black is up an exchange and a pawn. When I decided to go for this position I assessed it as very good compensation. After we reached the position I upgraded my evaluation to strategically winning. Some positive factors that I considered before

sacrificing:

1. Safer king
2. Superior pieces and coordination
3. No foreseeable trading of pieces
4. Easier to play.

20.♗f4

Necessary to stop Black's ideas of ...f4 and ...f5 activating the bishop. The beautiful part about White's position is that there is no rush to prove compensation: White's advantage is almost entirely positional and will not go away unless there is a big change in the pawn structure or an exchange of pieces, and Black can't force either of those... even though he can try.

20...♘e5

A desperate attempt to make life easier as we approached *zeitnot*. 20...♖ae8 21.♘h4 ♕e4 22.♕d2±.

21.♘h4

From here until the end I spent nearly no time− the position truly seemed to play itself. White has the luxury of time, and with that, the ability to try to place all his pieces on good squares.

For those wondering: 21.dxe5 fxe5 22.♕e2 ♕b6+ 23.♗e3 ♕xb2 24.♖f1∞.

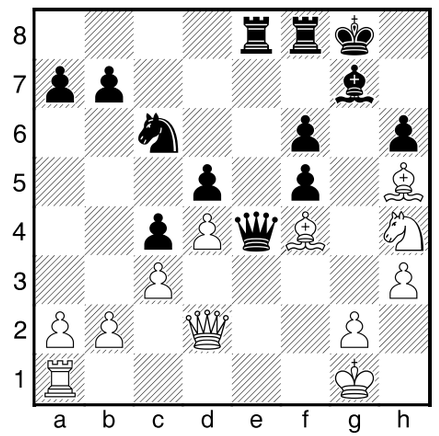
21...♘c6 22.♕d2 ♖ae8

Another attempt to exchange pieces — at the cost of an exchange this time — but my light−square pressure is worth more than an exchange, so...

23.c3

...offer declined.

23...♕e4 24.h3



There are many acceptable ways to play this as White. I decide to keep the queens on the board and slowly make my way towards Black's king. The weak light squares and pawns near the king allow many points of penetration.

24...♖f7

24...♕d3 25.♕f2 With ♗f3 and ♖d1 coming up to trap the Queen.

25.♕f2 ♖fe7 26.♕g3 ♖d7

26...♕c2 27.♗xe8 ♖xe8 28.♕g6+-.

27.♗g6 ♘d8 28.♘xf5 ♕e6 29.♗xh6 ♖ee7 30.♗xg7 ♖xg7 31.♖e1

My opponent threw in the towel before I could play ♖e8 mate.

One of the best games in my career, especially if judged with aesthetics in mind. I did not include a lot of variations after 16.f6 because I consider the resulting position lost for Black, but I do invite the reader to look for counterplay.

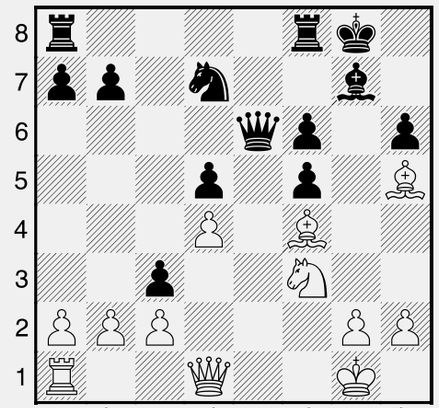
After my game ended we won on two other boards to win the match 3-1 over Cuba. This upset result gave us a lot of confidence heading into the second half of the tournament.

1-0

editor:

GM Daniel King analyzed this in *British Chess Magazine*, where he says he thinks this is where Black went wrong. Instead he suggests Black try: ***20...c3!?***

Analysis Diagram



If ***21.bxc3*** then 21...♖fc8 at least gives the rooks something to bite on, or *21...♘b6* and the knight has found a square. Objectively the position is still better for White, but there is counterplay; and that might have driven Hansen into closing the position.

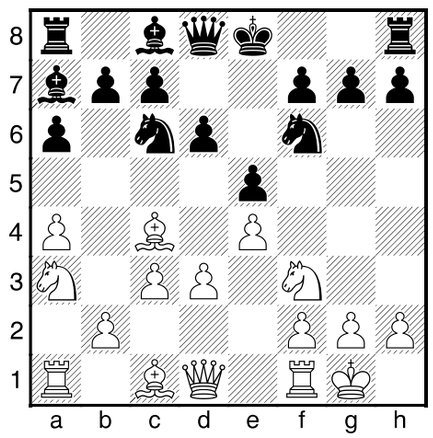
21.b3?! is tempting if White is playing for complete control as in the game, but it would have been an error: after 21...♕e4, Black has counterplay against the d−pawn.

− Daniel King, *BCM* 2016 #11.

Ortiz Suarez ,Isan Reynaldo (2581)
Lesiege,Alexandre (2512)
C54
42nd Olympiad Baku (5.39), 06.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

A closed maneuvering game with the first pawn exchange on move 34 (!) turns into an equal 4–rook ending... which White misplays when the match situation forced him to press for winning chances.

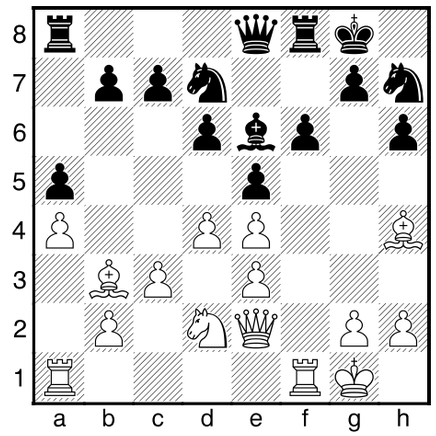
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 a6 7.a4 ♗a7 8.♘a3



8...0-0
8...♘e7 9.♘c2 0-0 10.♗e3 ♗xe3 11.♘xe3 ♘g6 12.a5 ♘g4 13.h3 ♘xe3 14.fxe3 ♕e7 15.♕b3 c6 16.d4 ♗e6 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.♖ad1 ♖ae8 19.♕b4 exd4 20.cxd4 e5 21.dxe5! dxe5 22.♕xe7 ♖xe7 23.♖d6± (1-0, 38) Carlsen,M−Anand,V Leuven, 2016.

9.♗g5 ♕e7
9...h6 10.♗h4 g5 11.♗g3 ♗g4 12.♘c2 d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.d4 exd4 15.cxd4 ♗h5 *(15...♘f4!?)* 16.♖a3 ♔h8 17.♕d2 f5? 18.♗e5+ *(18.♗xd5! ♕xd5 19.♘xg5!! f4 20.♘h3!+-)* 18...♘xe5 19.♘xe5 (½-½, 45) Dragun,K−Gajewski,G Poznan, 2016.

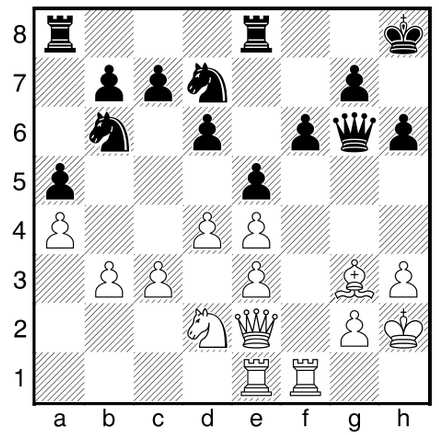
10.♗b3 h6 11.♗h4 ♗e6 12.♘c4 ♘b8 13.♘e3 ♗xe3 14.fxe3 ♘bd7 15.♗c2 a5 16.♕e2 ♕e8 17.♘d2 ♘h7 18.d4 f6 19.♗b3



After the exchange of light square ♗s Black's position will be solid but inflexible. White has problems finding something for his ♗ to do.

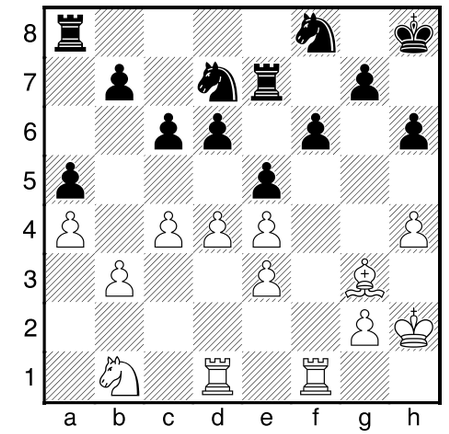
19...♗xb3 20.♘xb3 ♘b6 21.♘d2 ♔h8
21...♘xa4?? 22.♕c4++-.

22.b3 ♕g6 23.♖ae1 ♖fe8 24.h3 ♘f8 25.♔h2 ♘fd7 26.♗g3



26...c6
This gives White a way to activate his dark−square ♗ with an eventual c4-c5; in return, that will concede the e5 square to a Black ♘.

27.♕f3 ♖e7 28.c4 ♘f8 29.♕d1 ♘bd7 30.♕a1 ♘h7 31.h4 ♕g4 32.♕d1 ♕xd1 33.♖xd1= ♘hf8 34.♘b1



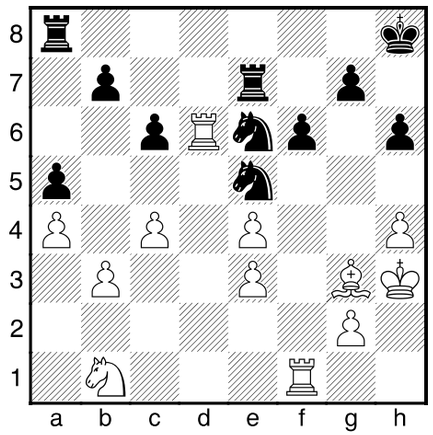
The first pawn capture of the game!

34...exd4
34...♘e6 35.dxe5?? dxe5-+ and a ♘c5 will pick White's pawns apart.

35.♖xd4
35.exd4 ♖xe4 36.♘c3 ♖e3 37.♖f3=.

35...♘e5 36.♔h3?!
36.♖xd6 ♘g4+ 37.♔g1 ♘xe3 38.♖e1 ♖xe4 39.♘d2 ♖ee8 40.♖d3 ♘f5 41.♖xe8 ♖xe8 42.♗f2∓.

36...♘e6 37.♖xd6



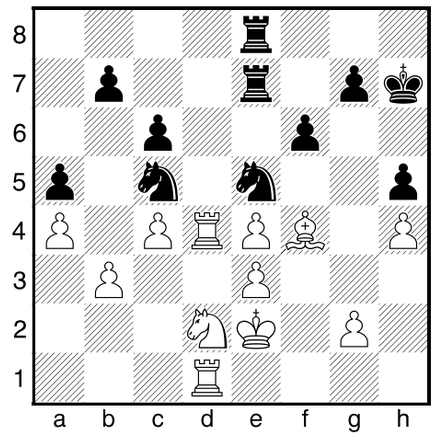
37...♘c5?
Missing a chance to win a pawn:

37...♘f7! 38.♖dd1 *(38.♖d3 ♘c5* also wins a pawn.*)* 38...♘c5 39.♘d2 ♖d8∓ will win the b3-pawn as White can't allow Black to double on the d−file.

38.♘d2= ♖ae8
38...♘f7 39.♖d4.

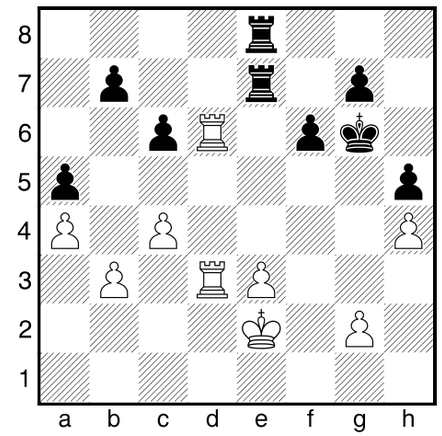
39.♖f5 ♔g8 40.♖d4 ♔f7 41.♖f1 h5 42.♗f4 ♔g6 43.♔g3 ♔h7 44.♖d1 ♘f7 45.♔f2 ♘e5
45...g5!?

46.♔e2



Black's minor pieces are more active than White's, but there's no way to increase that advantage or turn it into material... and although it can't go anywhere, White is still up a pawn.

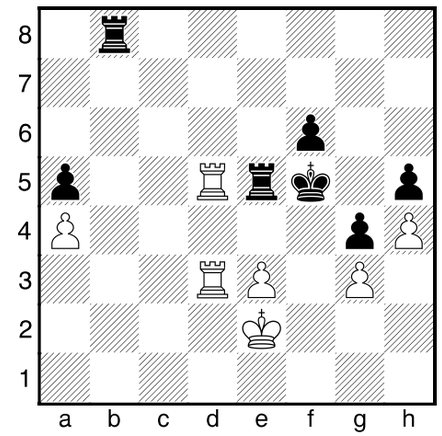
46...♖g8 47.♖h1 ♖ge8 48.♖b1 ♘f7 49.♖d1 ♘e5 50.♖f1 ♔g6 51.♗g3 ♖a8 52.♖d1 ♖ae8 53.♗h2 ♔h7 54.♗f4 ♔g6 55.♖b1 ♘f7 56.♖g1 ♘e5 57.♖d1 ♘f7 58.♖b1 ♘e5 59.♖g1 ♔h7 60.♗g3 ♔g6 61.♖b1 ♘f7 62.♗h2 ♘e5 63.♘f3 ♘f7 64.♘d2 ♘e5 65.♖f1 ♖a8 66.♗g3 ♘f7 67.♗d6 ♘xd6 68.♖xd6 ♘xe4 69.♘xe4 ♖xe4 70.♖f4 ♖e7 71.♖fd4 ♖ae8 72.♖d3



A "dead drawn" rook ending... if both sides play right.

72...♔f5 73.♔f3 g5 74.g3 ♖e5 75.♖d7 b5 76.cxb5 cxb5 77.♖7d5 bxa4 78.bxa4
78.e4+! ♔g6 79.♖xe5 ♖xe5 80.bxa4=.

78...g4+ 79.♔e2 ♖b8



80.♖xe5+??
Not the sort of mistake you'd expect from a 2580 GM, but at this point White knew he had to play for a win to draw the match. Every other reasonable move draws.

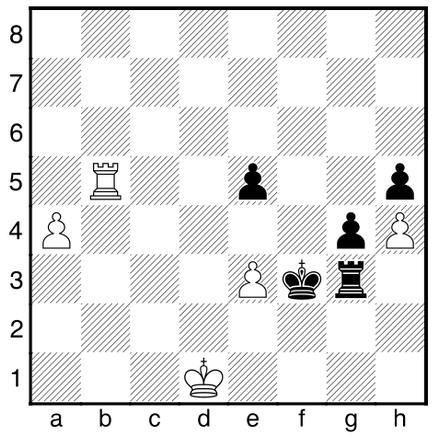
Sweets

A late round treat from Cuba.

80...fxe5!
Suddenly it's a fairly simple technical win: Black now has the more active ♔, and more active ♖, and targets on e3 and g3, and (sitting on g4) the furthest advanced pawn.

81.♖d5
81.♖c3 ♔e4! 82.♖c4+ ♔d5 83.♔d3 *(83.♖c2 ♖b4-+)* 83...♖b3+ 84.♖c3 ♖xc3+ 85.♔xc3 ♔e4-+.

81...♔e4 82.♖xa5 ♖b2+ 83.♔d1 ♖g2 84.♖b5 ♖xg3 85.♖b4+ ♔f3 86.♖b5



86...♖h3
86...e4 87.♖xh5 ♔xe3 also wins.

87.♖xe5 ♖xh4 88.♔d2 g3

89.♖f5+ ♔g4 90.♖f8 ♔h3 91.♖g8 g2 92.♔e2 ♖g4

0-1

Round 6: Canada 2.5 - Belarus 1.5

It was a difficult decision for me when choosing the lineup against Belarus. After some consideration, I chose to continue with our strategy and give another White to Eric. That meant another rest day for Alex, even after his great win in the previous round. I discussed this decision with Alex, and I was very happy with his positive reaction.

We played against Belarus four years ago in Istanbul. They had a similar lineup as in 2012, but our team was much stronger this time around, so the average rating was very close between us. They had also played well in the Olympiad so far, losing just 1 individual game in the first five rounds.

On board 4 Belarus had more than 100 rating points advantage *and* the White colour. However, Tomas successfully avoided any problems and equalized the game after the opening.

There was a funny pairing on board 2: Kovalev - Kovalyov. Anton was under pressure with Black: his opponent won a pawn, but traded too many pieces and gave Anton some serious chances for the draw. Anton easily held rook endgame "2 on 3".

Eric was outplayed in a sharp Sicilian and he was forced to sacrifice the exchange. He was in deep time trouble and made one of his moves with just 2 seconds remaining on his clock. If I could be frank, when the time started ticking off of his clock, I became so nervous with the fact that he might flag that I had to look away. Being down the exchange and playing on the increment only, Eric continued fighting. The position remained very sharp with a lot of strong threats for both sides. His opponent also got into time trouble, and made a few weak moves which led him to eventually blundering a piece due to a relatively simple tactic. The rest was easy, and another nice combination by Eric gave him an extra bishop in a simple endgame.

Eric was outplayed in a sharp Sicilian... He was in deep time trouble and made one of his moves with just 2 seconds remaining on his clock.

I became so nervous that I had to look away.

Evgeny got an advantage on board 1 with White. Evgeny eventually lost some of his advantage, but his position remained better. However, the match situation did not force him to take any risk and a draw was agreed.

With 3 consecutive wins, we were tied for 3rd-12th place in the standings after round 6. There were no weak teams at this level, and we got a very strong opponent again.

- Victor Plotkin

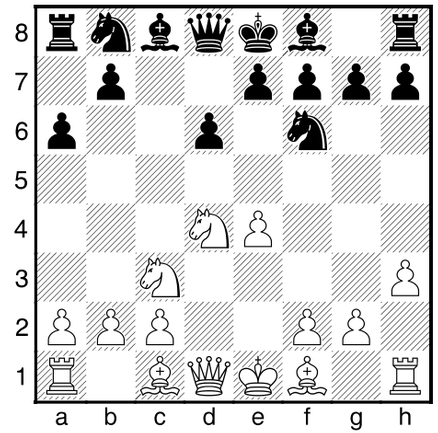
Notes by GM Eric Hansen

Hansen, Eric (2582)
Zhigalko, Andrey (2591)
B81
42nd Olympiad Baku (6.5), 08.09.2016

Belarus was a similar team to us in terms of ranking. They were also relatively young and well-prepared. Anything could happen

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4
Already a risky for me, since Zhigalko is a Najdorf specialist, whereas I normally play 3.♗b5+.

3...cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.h3

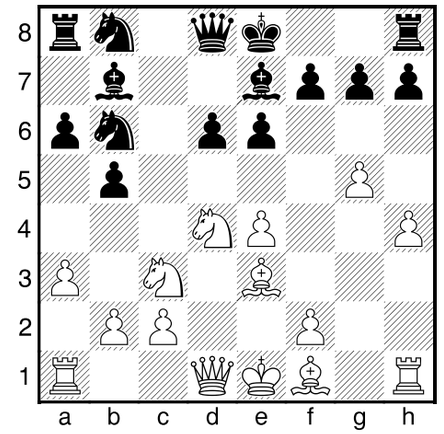


6.h3 is very fashionable these days, which makes it easier to prepare.

6...e6
6...e5 7.♘de2 *or 7.♘b3.*

7.g4 ♗e7 8.g5 ♘fd7 9.♗e3 b5
9...♗xg5 10.♘xe6 fxe6 11.♕h5+ g6 12.♕xg5±.

10.a3 ♗b7 11.h4 ♘b6



12.♕d2

More aggressive would have been 12.f4 ♘a4 13.♘xa4 ♗xe4 14.♘xb5 0-0 15.♖g1 axb5 16.♘c3 ♗c6 17.h5 ♘d7∞ Oparin, G−Zhigalko,S Jerusalem, 2015.

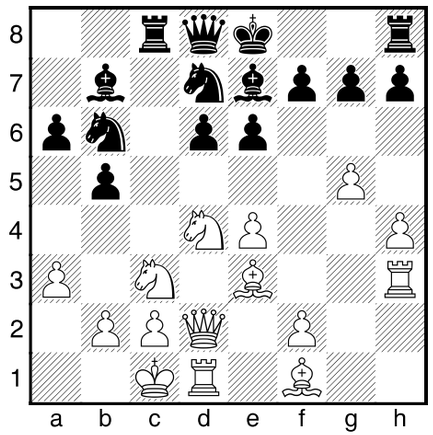
12...♘8d7 13.0-0-0 ♖c8 14.♖h3
14.♔b1 ♕c7 15.♕e1 The setup I wanted to achieve was: ♖h3, ♗c1 and then start to push on the kingside without worrying about Black's queenside play.

Belarus Bailout

Draws for Bareev, Kovalyov and Krnan left Canada in desperate trouble as Hansen was totally losing.

But not lost!

Unfortunately, I'm just not in time to achieve it. 15...♘c4 *(15...♘e5 16.♖h3 ♘ec4 17.♗c1 0-0 18.h5* Looks nice for White.*)* 16.♗c1? ♘xa3+-+.



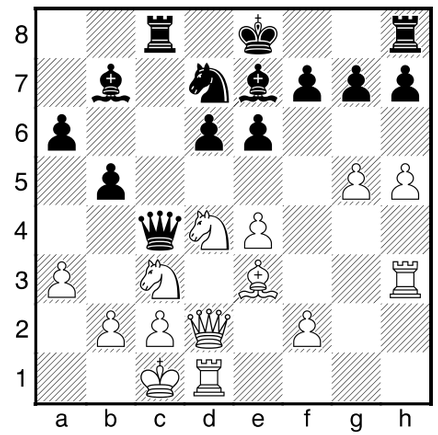
14...♕c7
Black has utilized a flexible move order quite successfully. I was not comfortable at all here and as a result soon found myself in serious time trouble.

I'd expected something like: 14...♘e5 15.♕e1 ♘ec4 16.♔b1 ♘xe3 17.♖xe3 0-0 18.f4 This was a position I had actually prepared before the game. I never came close to achieving it since Black didn't help me out by playing ...♘e5 and ...0-0.

15.h5
Just drifting here as I didn't see anything else.

15.♔b1 ♘c4 16.♗xc4 ♕xc4 17.♘b3 b4 18.axb4 ♕xb4 Black should be preferred with the two bishops, although in retrospect maybe I should have bailed out and gone for it; e.g. 19.♕d4 ♕xd4 20.♖xd4 f6 White has nothing to complain about.

15...♘c4 16.♗xc4 ♕xc4



It is fair to say Black has won the opening phase decisively. By withholding castling, Black has left me without a constructive way to attack, and therefore my developmental advantage is insignificant. Black can enjoy the two bishops and natural queenside play.

I found myself wishing I was playing Black in this position rather than working hard at the board to fight it out.

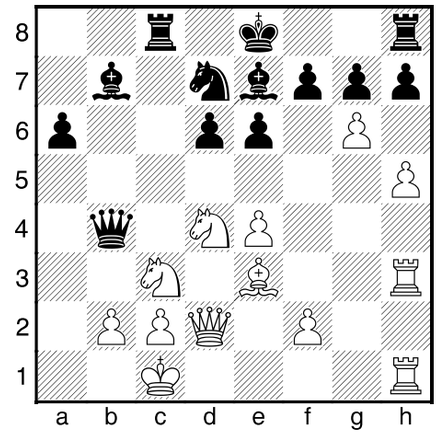
- Eric Hansen

17.♖dh1?!
A poor and unnatural move which shows my discomfort. It was one of those cases where I found myself wishing I was playing Black in this position rather than working hard at the board to fight it out.

Perfectly playable was: 17.♖g3 b4 *(17...g6 18.♘b3 (18.♖h3!?) 18...b4 19.axb4 ♕xb4 20.♕e2∞)* 18.axb4 ♕xb4 19.g6 hxg6 20.hxg6 ♗f6 *(20...♘e5 21.gxf7+ ♔xf7 22.♗g5 ♘c4 23.♕f4+ ♔e8 (23...♗f6? 24.♘b3+-) 24.♘b3±)* 21.gxf7+ ♔xf7 22.♗g5 ♕xd4 23.♕xd4 ♗xd4 24.♖xd4 ♖h1+ 25.♔d2 ♖c6 26.♖b4 ♗c8 27.♗e3 I'd give a slight preference to White here.

17...b4∓
Don't think anybody is going to castle after I've pre−emptively doubled my rooks on the h−file.

18.axb4 ♕xb4 19.g6



I wasn't happy to play 19.g6 because I didn't think it threatened anything.

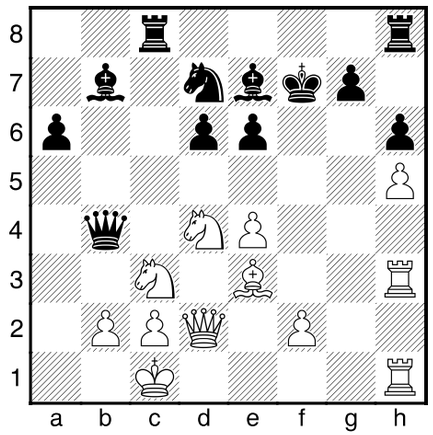
19...h6!?
An inaccuracy. Unfortunately I was already in extreme time trouble at this point and did not have time to catch it.

I spent the bulk of my time worrying about the more direct 19...♘e5!?:
Black may have been worried about 20.h6 but Black maintains a comfortable edge with the cool

20...fxg6 *(20...♘c4?? 21.hxg7 ♖g8 22.gxh7 ♕xb2+ 23.♔d1+-)* 21.hxg7 ♖g8 22.♘b3 *(22.♖xh7 ♘c4-+)* 22...♗xe4 23.♘xe4 ♕xe4 24.♖xh7 ♗f6∓.

20.gxf7+ ♔xf7 21.♕e2 ♗f6∓ or 21...♖xc3!?.

20.gxf7+ ♔xf7



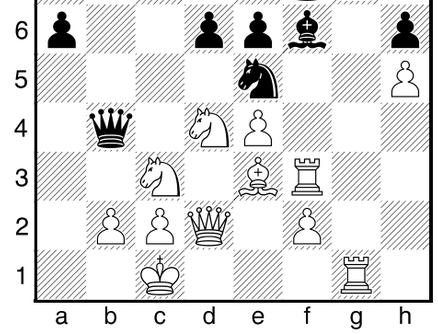
21.♖f3+?

Better is 21.♖g1 ♘e5 22.♘b3 ♗xe4 *(22...♘c4 23.♕d4 ♗f6 24.♖f3 Threatening ♖xg7 24...e5 25.♕d3 ♘xe3 26.♕xe3± and the roles have reversed, as White ends up with an easier attack.)* 23.♖hg3 ♖hg8 24.♗d4 ♗f5 25.f4 ♘c6 26.♖xg7+ ♖xg7 27.♖xg7+ ♔e8 28.♖g8+ ♗f8 *(28...♔d7? 29.♘c5+!)* 29.♗g7 ♔f7 30.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 31.♗xf8 ♔xf8∓ the end− game is better for Black, but with the king positions as they are I think White retains excellent chances to hold if queens stay on the board.

21...♗f6∓

Now I can't stop ...♘e5-c4 while my pieces also look sloppy. In truth, this was all based on a miscalculation.

22.♖g1 ♘e5

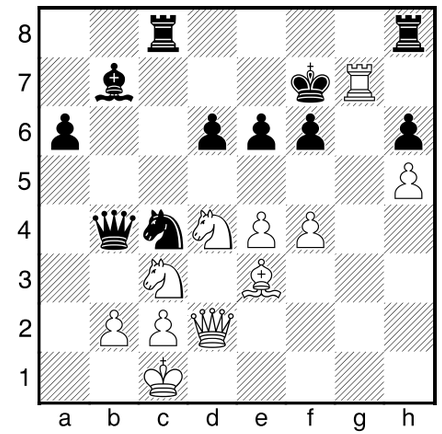


Honestly, I was about to resign here. The threats of ...♘c4 and ...♘xf3, plus the utter disgust I had with myself for failing to generate any play had built up to a climax. Everything I calculated seemed to fail. However, with 3 seconds on my clock I changed my mind...

23.♕e2

My original intention was ***23.♖xg7+*** ♔xg7 24.♖xf6 ♔xf6 25.♘d5+ exd5 26.♕xb4 which would be totally winning, except I'd missed 26...♘d3+□-+ Oops.

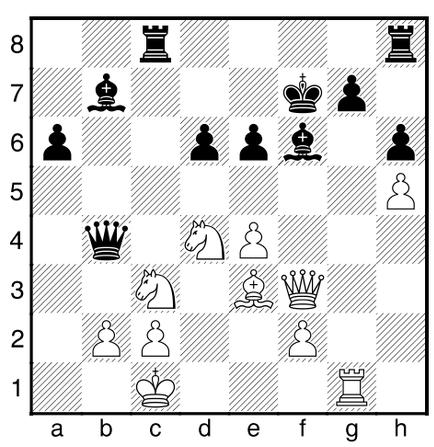
My second, and better, try was ***23.♖xf6+*** gxf6 24.f4 ♘c4 25.♖g7+: *Analysis Diagram*



During the game I had hoped for this: ***25...♔xg7*** 26.♕g2+ ♔f8 *(26...♔f7 27.♕g6+ ♔e7 28.♕g7+ ♔e8 29.♕xh8+ ♔e7 30.♕h7+ ♔e8=)* 27.♘xe6+ ♔e8 *(*Not *27...♔e7?? 28.♕g7+ ♔xe6 29.f5+ ♔e5 30.♕e7#)* 28.♕g6+ ♔d7 29.♕f7+ ♔c6-+ Turns out Black is winning here, but it certainly looked appealing to my thin calculation.

But I overlooked this: ***25...♔e8!*** I missed this move until I thought about the position a few moves later. White is desperately trying to get Black's king in range of the knight on c3 26.♖e7+ *(26.♕g2? ♕xb2+ 27.♔d1 ♘xe3+-+)* 26...♔f8! *(26...♔xe7? 27.♘d5+□ ♗xd5 28.♕xb4 ♗xe4 29.♗f2 ♖hg8 30.b3 e5∞)* 27.♘xe6+ ♔xe7 28.♘d5+ ♗xd5 29.♕xb4 a5!!-+ and Black gets an extra piece out of the trades compared to the ....♔xe7 line.

23...♘xf3 24.♕xf3



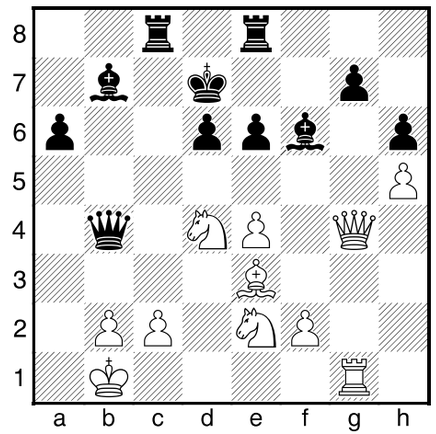
It was a team game after all, so this was not the time to feel sorry for myself. I managed to reset my brain and made it my goal to make this conversion as difficult as possible for Black.

24...♔e7
I realized my position was not without chances when I saw the following variation 24...♖xc3? 25.bxc3 ♕a3+ *(25...♕xc3 26.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 27.♗xh6+ ♖xh6 28.♕xc3+-)* 26.♔d2 ♖c8? 27.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 28.♘xe6+ ♔f7 29.♗d4! ♔xe6 30.♕f5+!+-.

25.♘ce2
Black's technical task isn't too easy because until his king is safe he needs to keep his bishop on f6 to hold the g7-pawn. That means Black doesn't have any clear way of trading off White's more active minor pieces.

25...♖he8 26.♕g4 ♔d7
At this point Zhigalko was getting low on time himself, but he was on the right path to victory...

27.♔b1



27...♔c7??
A simple plan would be 27... a5 followed by moves such as ...a4 and ...♖b8, and I don't see how White can hold. I have no threats.

28.e5+-
I had seen this shot a few moves back when I was desperately looking for tricks to get myself mentally back in the game. White threatens exf6 and ♘xe6+ with an attack on the undefended ♕b4, so White wins a piece.

I was about to resign...

However, with 3 seconds on my clock I changed my mind...

- Eric Hansen

Andrey had calculated 28.♘xe6+ ♔b8 29.♘2d4 Where Black's king is safe and White's position overextended for the cost of a pawn. Now ...a5-a4 would be a very natural and strong attack.

28...♔d7 29.exf6 gxf6 30.♕g7+ ♖e7 31.♕xf6 ♗d5 32.♘f4 ♖b8 33.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 34.♘xd5+
What can I say — I got very lucky. I only woke up and got into a healthy frame of mind after I got a losing position.

This game ended up being the tie−breaker: we drew on the other three boards and so won the match 2.5 − 1.5.

1-0

Round 7:
Canada 1.5 - Ukraine 2.5

It was a funny situation for me when I found myself sitting next to the Ukrainian captain in the bus from our hotel to the tournament site. We had talked a few times at the previous Olympiad. This time, we did not talk about chess. When speaking about the match between our teams he said: “We do not underestimate your team. Canada plays great here”. To put that compliment in context, before facing us, the Ukraine’s three previous opponents were: Russia, China, and USA — all top-3 teams.

Canada was never so close to beating one of the best teams in the world.

Canada was never so close to beating one of the best teams in the world.

We got a great win on board 1 this round, where Evgeny showed his fantastic technique and beat Pavel Eljanov with the Black pieces. White was better initially with 4 pawns for a knight, but played too slowly and allowed Black to capture one pawn after another.

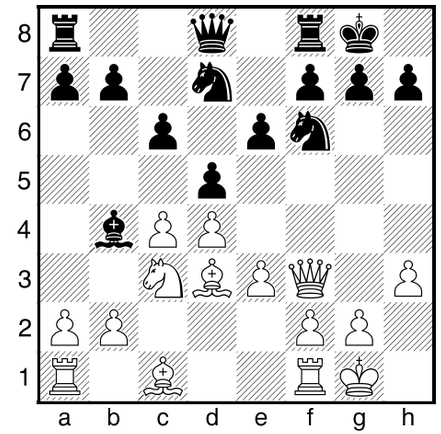
With our loss on board 3 and a quiet draw on board 2, Eric's game, as in a match against Belarus, was decisive for the match. Unfortunately, the scenario was the exact opposite this round: Eric missed a win in the middlegame and made a few weak moves in the endgame.

- Victor Plotkin

Eljanov,Pavel (2739)
Bareev,Evgeny (2675)

D11
42nd Olympiad Baku (7.1), 09.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 ♗g4 5.♘c3 e6 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♕xf3 ♘bd7 8.♗d3 ♗b4 9.0-0 0-0



In his 2008 Everyman book *Play the Slav*, James Vigus called this line the "Errot", since Black is playing a Torre reversed.

10.a3

23 minutes on this move. That's long for a theoretically known position, but White has a choice of very different middle games here:

a) 10.e4? dxc4 and White loses one of his center pawns; e.g. 11.♗xc4 ♘b6 12.♕d3 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♘xc4 14.♕xc4 ♘xe4∓.

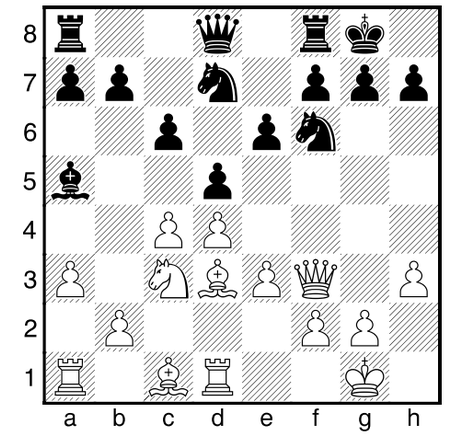
b) 10.♕d1 dxc4 11.♗xc4 c5 12.♕b3 cxd4 13.exd4 ♕a5 14.♖d1 ♖ac8 with an IQP middlegame in Anand,V−Aronian,L Mainz, 2009.

c) 10.♗d2 ♖e8 11.♕d1 ♕e7 12.♕b3 dxc4 13.♗xc4 ♘b6 14.♗e2 ♖ad8 15.♖ad1 ♗d6 16.a4 e5 17.a5 ♘bd5= White has the ♗ pair, but couldn't find anything to do with it: 18.♗c4 a6 19.♘xd5 cxd5 20.♗xd5 ♘xd5 21.♕xd5 exd4 22.♕b3 ♗c5 23.exd4 ♗xd4 24.♗c3 ♗xc3 ½-½ Vallejo Pons,F−Wang,H Pattaya, 2015.

10...♗a5

Vigus recommended: 10...♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♕a5! 12.♗d2 e5 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.♕d1 ♕c7 15.♕b3 e4 16.♗e2 ♘b6 17.♖fb1 ♖ab8= (0-1,43) Gelfand,B−Henriquez Villagra,C Baku World Cup, 2015.

11.♖d1



11...e5

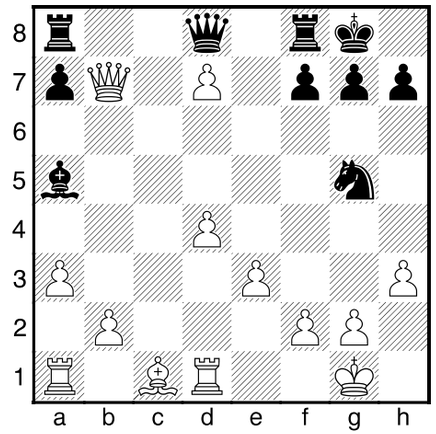
29 minutes on this move!?

11...♗xc3N 12.bxc3 e5 it looks foolish to give White the two ♗s and then open the center, but it's the same plan as in the Gelfand game above, and it seems to head to equality here too: 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.dxe5 *(14.♕g3 e4 15.♗f1 ♖c8∞)* 14...♘xe5 15.♕f5 ♘xd3 16.♖xd3 ♕b6=.

12.cxd5! ♗xc3 13.dxc6!
White gives up a piece for four pawns.

13...e4! 14.♗xe4 ♘xe4 15.cxd7
15.♕xe4? ♘f6 16.♕f3 ♗a5 17.cxb7 ♖b8 the b−pawn will drop before White can finish developing.

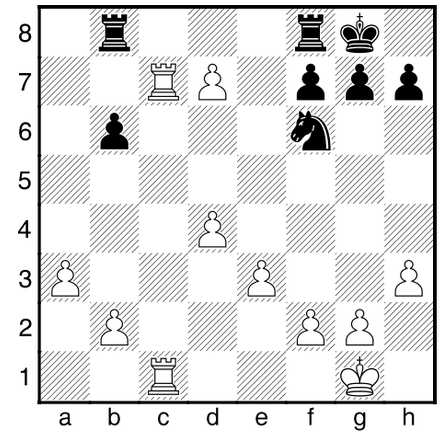
15...♘g5 16.♕xb7 ♗a5



17.♗d2?!
Here and at move 19 White might have been better off avoiding the piece exchanges, since Black's extra pieces will find themselves cramped as White's pawns move up the board. 17.f4!? was better.

17...♗xd2 18.♖xd2 ♕b6 19.♕xb6
19.♕d5 h6 20.♖c1∞ again, keeps more pieces on.

19...axb6 20.♖c2 ♘e4 21.♖ac1 ♘f6 22.♖c7 ♖ab8

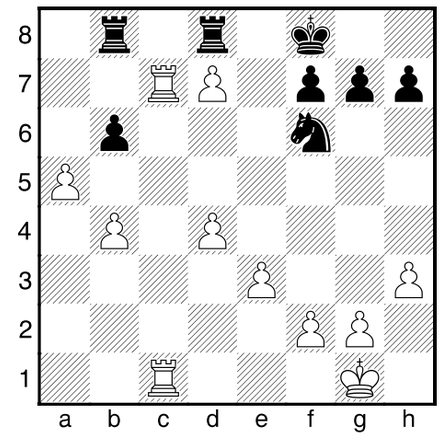


White has four pawns for the ♘, though the d7-pawn can't be saved.

23.a4
23.f3 ♖fd8 24.e4 ♖xd7 25.♖xd7 ♘xd7 26.♖c7⩲.

23...♖fd8 24.b4 ♔f8
24...♖xd7 25.♖xd7 ♘xd7.

25.a5



He's still got it!

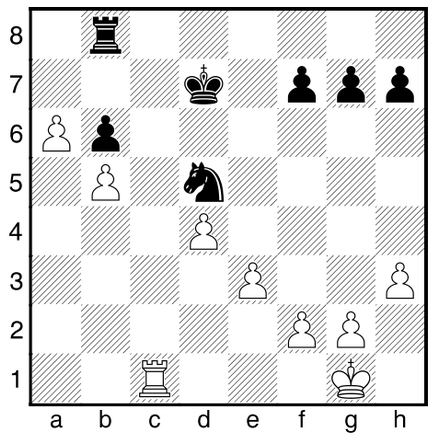
Victor Plotkin watches as Evgeny Bareev ponders his game-winning Knight sac vs Pavel Eljanov.

25...♔e7
Black can avoid giving White the protected passer by trading on a5 now; but that trade would also reduce the number of targets that the Black pieces can attack: 25...bxa5 26.bxa5 ♔e7 27.♖a7 ♖xd7 28.♖cc7 Black is nominally better, but it's hard to imagine White losing this so long as he keeps one ♖ active.

26.a6 ♘d5 27.♖c8
27.♖7c4 b5! 28.♖c8 ♔xd7 29.♖8c5∞.

27...♔xd7□ 28.♖xb8?∓
⌓28.♖8c6=.

28...♖xb8 29.b5

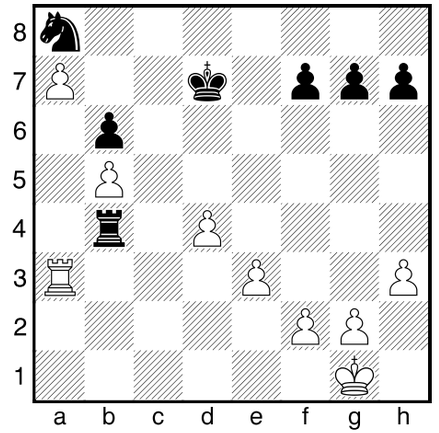


A position Black had to correctly assess at move 25.

29...♖c8 30.♖b1
30.♖xc8 ♔xc8-+ and the ♘ wins the b−pawn.

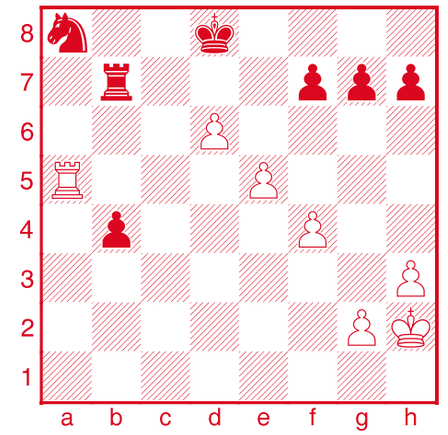
30...♖c4! 31.♖b3
31.e4 ♘c7 32.♖a1 ♖xd4.

31...♘c7 32.♖a3 ♖b4 33.a7 ♘a8-+



34.d5 ♖b1+ 35.♔h2 ♖xb5 36.e4 ♖a5 37.♖f3 ♔e8

38.♖c3 ♔d8 39.d6 ♖xa7 40.e5 b5 41.f4 b4 42.♖c5 ♖b7 43.♖a5



43...♘c7□-+
43...♘b6?! 44.♖b5□∓ ♔d7 45.♖xb4 f6∓ this is probably winning, but not as clearly as the ♖ ending in the game.

43...♖b8? 44.♖a7 b3 45.♖xf7 ♖b6□ *(45...b2?? 46.♖f8++-)* 46.♖a7 (46.♖f8+ ♔d7 47.♖xa8 b2 48.♖a7+ ♔c8 49.♖c7+ ♔d8 *(49...♔b8?? 50.♖c3 b1♕ 51.d7+-)* 50.e6 ♖xd6□ 51.♖b7=) 46...b2 47.♖xa8+ ♔d7 48.♖a7+ ♔e6 49.♖e7+□ *(49.d7 ♔e7-+)* 49...♔f5 50.d7 ♖b8□ 51.♖f7+ ♔e6 52.d8♕ *(52.d8♘+?? ♔d5 53.e6 b1♕ 54.e7 ♕e4-+)* 52...♖xd8 53.♖b7 ♖d2=.

Post-game interview with Susan Polgar.

44.dxc7+ ♔xc7 45.♔g3 b3 46.♖a1 ♔c6 47.f5 b2 48.♖b1 ♔d5 49.f6
49.♔f4 ♖b4+ and Black takes the pawns.

49...gxf6 50.exf6 ♔e4 51.♔h4 ♖b5!
Cutting off the ♔ stops White from even dreaming about a race.

0-1

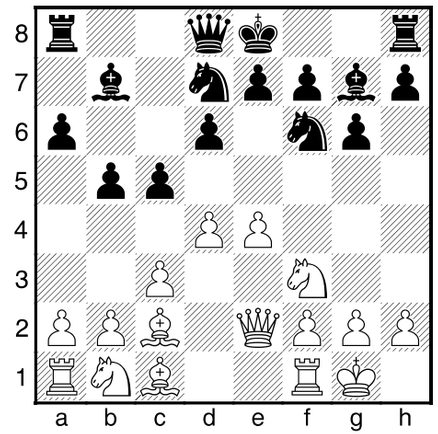
Hansen,Eric (2582)
Volokitin,Andrei (2647)

B51
42nd Olympiad Baku (7.4), 09.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

Before the rise of Magnus Carlsen, some talked about Andrei Volokitin as a potential World Champion. He certainly displayed his talents in Baku: winning the gold medal on board 4 with an absolute best TPR of 2992 (see table).

However, that might have been very different had Eric not been too clever for his own good in a position I would expect him to crack in bullet...

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+ ♘d7 4.c3 ♘gf6 5.♕e2 a6 6.♗a4 b5 7.♗c2 ♗b7 8.0-0 g6 9.d4 ♗g7



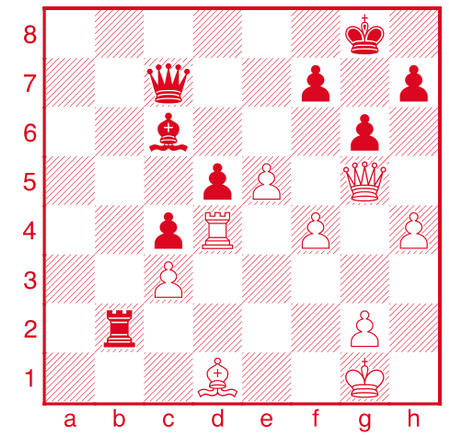
10.♖d1
A third round game in Baku continued: 10.♖e1 e5 11.a4 0-0 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 dxe5 14.axb5 axb5 15.♖xa8 ♕xa8 16.♘a3± (0-1, 46) Svetushkin,D–Nepomniachtchi,I Baku, 2016.

10...0-0 11.♘bd2 ♖c8 12.d5 c4 13.♘f1 ♘c5 14.♘g3 e6 15.dxe6 ♘xe6 16.a4 ♖e8 17.axb5 axb5 18.♘g5 ♖a8 19.♖xa8 ♗xa8 20.f3 d5 21.e5 ♘xg5 22.♗xg5 ♕c7 23.f4 ♘d7 24.♕f2 ♘c5 25.♘e2 ♖b8 26.♘d4

A ♗b5-Sicilian has turned into a very unbalanced middlegame, where White has kingside chances and Black can create pawn weakness then a passer by attacking c3.

26...b4 27.♕h4 bxc3 28.bxc3 ♘e6
28...♘e4 makes sense, hoping to activate the ♗a7. 29.♗xe4 dxe4 30.♗f6=.

29.♗f6 ♗xf6 30.♕xf6 ♘xd4 31.♖xd4 ♖b6 32.♕g5 ♖b2 33.♗d1 ♗c6 34.h4



What should Black play:...♕a5, ...♖b8, or ...♗d7.

Prize	Board 4	Name	Team	Rtg	Rp	Pts.	%	Games
1	GM	Volokitin Andrei	Ukraine	2647	2992	8.5	94.4	9
2	IM	Khader Sami	Jordan	2373	2932	8	100	8
3	GM	Aleksandrov A.	Belarus	2547	2760	6.5	81,3	8
4	GM	Safarli Eltaj	Azerbaijan 1	2688	2747	5.5	78,6	7
5	GM	Halkias Stelios	Greece	2565	2739	7	77,8	9
6	GM	Hansen Eric	Canada	2582	2738	9	81.8	11
7	GM	Grischuk Alex	Russia	2754	2719	6,5	72,2	9
8	GM	Short Nigel D	England	2666	2681	6.5	72,2	9
9	IM	Vedmediuc S.	Moldova	2437	2669	6.0	85,7	7
10	GM	Shankland Sam	USA	2679	2661	5.5	68,8	8

34...♕a5??
34...♖b1 isn't bad, but it doesn't change much after the calm 35.♔h2.

34...♗d7 is tricky. Black is hoping for counterplay against the white ♔, and he'd get it if White takes on d5 35.♖xd5? h6! 36.♕xh6 (36.♕e7?? ♕a7+! 37.♕c5 *(37.♔h1 ♕f2 38.♗f3 ♕f1+ 39.♔h2 ♕xf3-+)* 37...♕xc5+ 38.♖xc5 ♖b1 39.♖d5 ♗a4-+) 36...♗c6 37.♖d4 ♖xg2+=.

But after ***34...♗d7*** so long as White keeps cool with ***35.♗f3!*** Black's position is even more desperate than before.

⌓***34...♖b8*** guards the back rank so the black ♕ can go after c3 (or defend the dark squares with ...♕d8). 35.h5!↑ ♕d8 36.♕g3↑ and White is ready to peel open the black kingside with hxg and f4-f5 or e5-e6.

35.h5!+-
Obviously the right pawn; f4-f5 threatens f6, which also creates mating threats on g7, but it also blocks the ♕'s route to the back rank.

35...♗d7
As good as any; stopping e5-e6, and possibly hoping for ...♕b6+ forking f6... or maybe encouraging the game blunder.

35...♕xc3? 36.♕d8+ ♔g7 37.h6+ ♔xh6 38.♕f8# Is it possible that Black overlooked this simple line when playing his previous move?

36.♖xd5??
A major move−order error. White had two winning moves, but this isn't either of them.

36.h6+- ♔f8 37.♖xd5□ ♕c7 *(Δ37...♕xd5 38.♕d8++-* winning the ♕d5.*)* 38.♕f6+- it's not mate, but White can win the h−pawn or continue the attack with e5-e6.

36.♕e7! ♖b7 *(36...♕c7 37.e6!+-)* 37.e6+- or *37.♖xd5+- ♕c7 38.h6.*

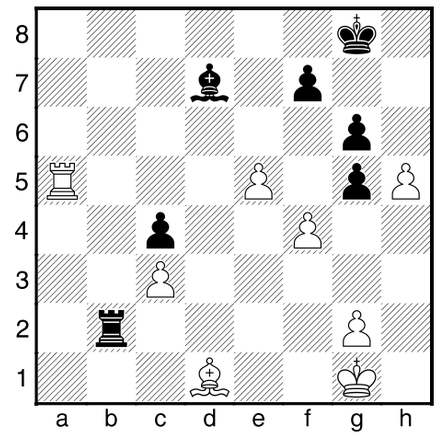
36...h6□∞
Attacks the ♕ when it has no checks and creates an escape square on h7.

36...♖xg2+ 37.♕xg2□+-.

36...♕xd5 fails to a mate we saw before: 37.♕d8+ ♔g7 38.h6+ ♔xh6 39.♕f8#.

37.♖xa5
≤37.♕xg6+ fxg6 38.♖xa5 ♖b1 39.hxg6∓.

37...hxg5



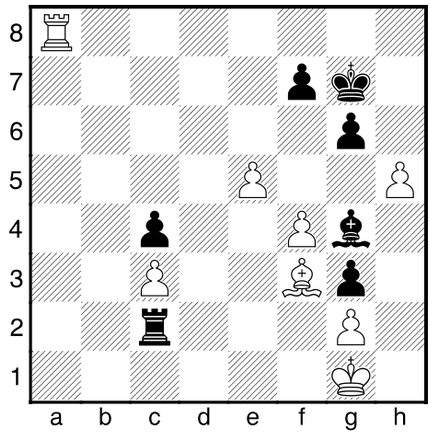
38.♗f3?
⌓38.♖d5= e.g. 38...♗e6 39.♖d8+ ♔g7 40.fxg5 gxh5 41.♗xh5 ♖c2 42.♖d6 ♖xc3 43.g6=.

38...g4! 39.♗d5 g3
Instead of White having a coffin nail on h6, Black has one on g3.

40.♔f1
40.♗xc4 ♖b1+ 41.♗f1 ♗g4-+ (Not *41...gxh5?? 42.e6□= and the* ♖a5 saves the day.*)*

40...♗g4 41.♗f3 ♖f2+

42.♔g1 ♖c2 43.♖a8+ ♔g7



44.♖a1

44.h6+! prevents Black from getting a useful h−pawn, but the result shouldn't be any different after 44...♔xh6 45.♖a1 ♔h5-+.

44...gxh5 45.♗xg4 hxg4 46.f5 ♖e2 47.e6 fxe6 48.fxe6 ♔f6 49.♔f1 ♖f2+ 50.♔g1 ♔xe6 51.♖e1+ ♔f5 52.♖f1 ♔e4□-+

0-1

Round 8: Canada 2 - Vietnam 2

After Cuba, Belarus, and Ukraine we got our 4th consecutive opponent from a Communist or "former Communist" country. We could have gotten Russia or China to continue this streak, but Vietnam was strong enough.

Vietnam had a former student of Evgeny, a 2720 player, on board 1. Another interesting player for them was on board 4, a very talented junior who won the WYCC twice and performed close to a GM norm in this Olympiad. My concern about board 4 was the reason to deviate from the traditional strategy and put Eric on board 4 with Black against this WYCC champion.

Stupid Karma

Eljanov and Plotkin watch as Eric pays for his Round 6 break.

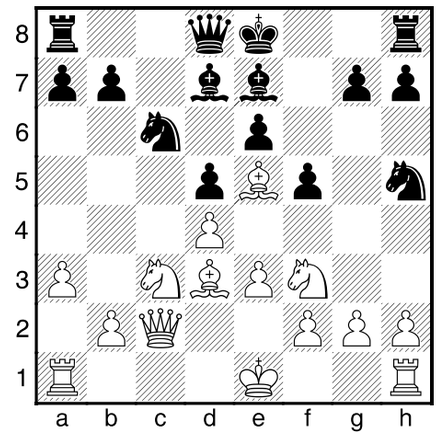
It was likely our least entertaining match in Baku. Very quickly, draws were agreed on boards 1, 2, and 4. Alex, while playing White, got a good position from the opening and won a pawn. His knights were very active and created a lot of strong threats, but his own king was not so safe. One weak move was enough to allow Black to start a strong counter attack. After that, a perpetual check was the best practical choice for White.

While a draw against a very solid team could not be counted as a bad result, I was slightly disappointed. For the second consecutive round we missed our chances at the final hour of the game. During the first six rounds, we gained a lot of points near the end of the round.

- Victor Plotkin

Lesiege,Alexandre (2512)
Nguyen,Huynh Minh Huy (2435)
D10
42nd Olympiad Baku (8.3), 10.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.♗f4 ♘c6 6.e3 ♗f5 7.♕b3 ♘a5 8.♕a4+ ♗d7 9.♕c2 e6 10.♘f3 ♘h5 11.♗e5 f6 12.♗g3 ♘c6 13.a3 ♗e7 14.♗d3 f5 15.♗e5



The exchange Slav is not a recipe for excitement, but the middlegames are something any 1.d4 d5 player should understand.

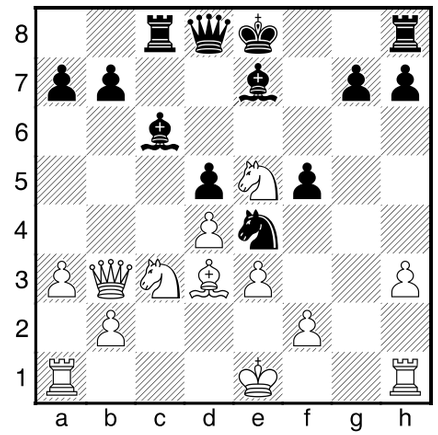
White is a bit better here because the ♗d7 is not a model

citizen. A typical way to activate that ♗ is for Black to play ...♘f6, ...00, and ...♗e8-g6/h5. White's attack with h3 and g4 crosses this plan while improving his own ♗d3. Black usually has to play ...♘f6-e4 to shut down this diagonal, and exchanges on e4 create an asymmetrical pawn structure where Black has to play actively to have chances; e.g. Sokolov−Navara (below).

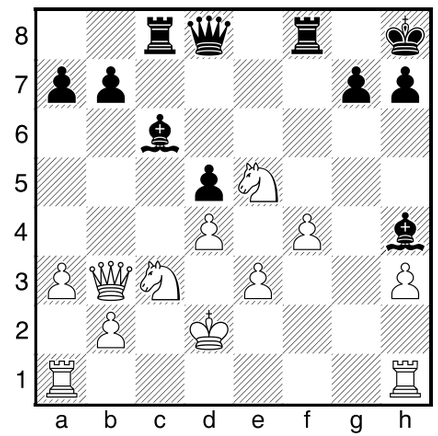
15...♘f6

15...0-0 16.h3 ♘f6 17.g4 *(17.♗f4 ♘e4 18.0-0 ♖c8 19.♖fc1 ♗f6 20.♕b3 ♘a5 21.♕a2 ♘xc3 22.bxc3 b5= (0-1, 50) Adams,M−Eljanov,P Biel, 2015.)* 17...♘e4 18.gxf5 ♖xf5 *(18...♘xc3!?=)* 19.♗xe4 dxe4 20.♕xe4 ♕b6= Black is down a pawn, but has the ♗ pair and with no white pawns in the center Black's LSB will be very strong. 21.b4 *(21.0-0-0? ♗xa3!∓; 21.d5? ♖xf3-+)* 21...♖af8 22.♖g1 ♖8f7 23.♗f4 ♘xb4⇄ getting the pawn back by threatening ...♗c6; Sokolov,I−Navara,D Saint−Quentin, 2014 (½-½, 35).

16.h3 ♖c8N 17.g4 ♘xe5 18.♘xe5 ♘e4 19.gxf5 exf5 20.♕b3 ♗c6

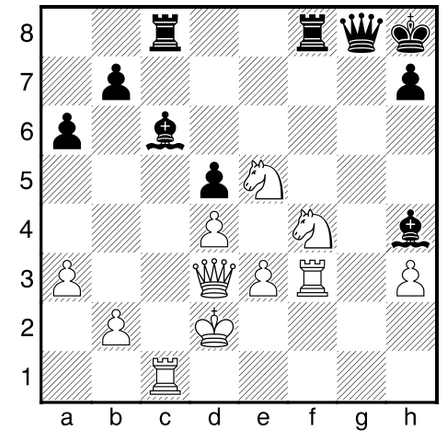


21.♗xe4! fxe4 22.♘xe4 0-0 23.f4!± ♔h8 24.♘c3 ♗h4+ 25.♔d2



White has won a pawn and has a strong ♘e5 but his ♔ is a little loose. Black has the two ♗s, so his next aims to loosen the ♘e5 and open lines to attack White's ♔.

25...g5 26.♘e2 ♕e8 27.♖ac1 a6 28.♖hf1 ♕e6 29.♖f3 gxf4 30.♘xf4 ♕g8 31.♕d3+-

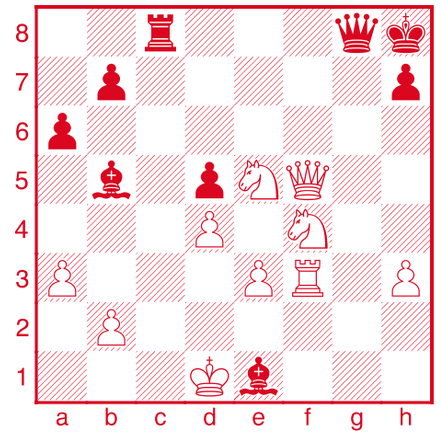


White has kept his pawn, stabilized the center, and has two dangerously placed ♘s. If his ♔ was on a1 it would be a fairly simple win.

31...♗b5 32.♖xc8 ♖xc8

32...♗xd3 33.♘fg6+ ♗xg6 34.♖fxf8+-.

33.♕f5 ♗e1+ 34.♔d1



What happens after ...♗a4+.

34...♗a4+ 35.♔e2??

<u>35.b3□+-</u> deflects the ♗ so there is no safe check from the a6-f1 diagonal: <u>35...♗xb3+ 36.♔e2!</u> *(36.♔xe1? ♕g1+□= 37.♔e2□ ♖c2+□ 38.♕xc2□ ♗xc2 39.♘e6*

White's pieces keep the Black ♔ boxed in; the most amusing draw is: *39...♗d1+ 40.♔d3 ♗xf3 41.♘f7+ ♔g8 42.♘h6+ ♔h8 43.♘f7+=)* 36...♖c2+ 37.♔f1!+- *(37.♔xe1?? ♕g1+ 38.♖f1 ♕xe3+-+; 37.♔d1?? ♖a2+-+)* 37...♕g7 38.♘f7+ ♔g8 39.♘g5+- White has a deadly attack and Black's ♗e1 is now hanging.

35...♖c2+ 36.♔f1 ♗b5+ 37.♘ed3 ♗h4

37...♗xd3+? 38.♕xd3+-.

38.♕e5+

38.♘e2!? ♗xd3?? 39.♕e5++-.

38...♕g7 39.♕b8+ ♕g8 40.♕e5+ ♕g7 41.♕b8+ ♕g8 42.♕e5+

½-½

Round 9: Canada 3½ - Denmark ½

Statistically, a good tie-break is supposed to make your tournament life easier. Our tie-break was great during the entire Olympiad, but it did not translate into friendly pairings for the first 8 rounds. Finally, in the money rounds, we got very comfortable pairings in both round 9 and 10. I also liked the fact that we got a second White in a row. This allowed me to give a game to Tomas after two days-off and to have Eric play White at the same time.

Scoring only 1 team point in the previous 2 rounds moved us to the bottom end of the podium, so only a win would allow us to continue our tournament in the top area. I remember that we discussed the tournament situation at the team meeting. I told our team members that our tie-break is so good and should give us the highest final position in any "points group". Eric asked me, "So will you be satisfied with the narrow 2.5 -1.5 win against Denmark?" My answer was, "Sure, three wins of 2.5-1.5 in remaining three rounds and we will be on the podium. Not on the podium with 20 teams, but on the real podium with 3 top teams only".

The most important game for us in this round was Tomas's with Black on the bottom board. It was the only board where our opponents had a rating advantage.

The most important game for us in this round was Tomas's game with Black on the bottom board. It was the only board where our opponents had a rating advantage. Tomas was forced to give up an exchange, but got good compensation with two pawns and a very active knight. His opponent made a few weak moves and his rook was trapped in the middle of the board. 0-1 for Tomas.

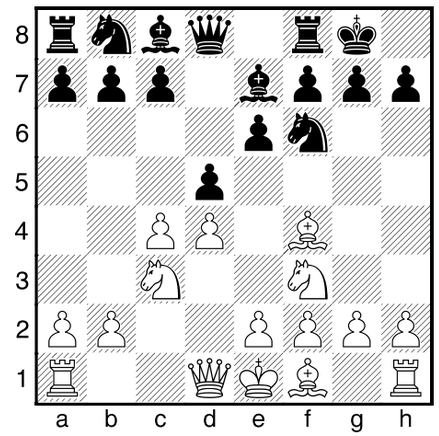
At one moment we were close to scoring a 4-0 victory with our wins on boards 2 and 3 and a very good position on board 1; but Evgeny missed good winning chances, and the final score was "only" 3.5-0.5. Honestly, I felt good about this match as it was easier and a bigger margin than I had expected.

- Victor Plotkin

Notes by GM Evgeny Bareev

Bareev,Evgeny (2675)
Hansen,Sune Berg (2595)
D37
42nd Olympiad Baku (9.10), 11.09.2016

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.d4 ♗e7 5.♗f4 0-0

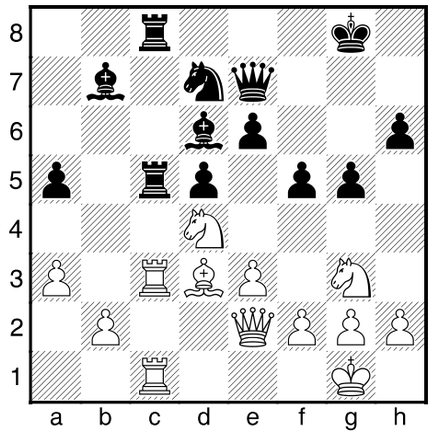


6.♕c2

In the previous round, playing against the former Blitz World Champion, I almost equalized in the modern line: 6.e3 ♘bd7 7.c5 ♘e4! Creating a manuevering battle where I *almost* outplayed him: 8.♗d3 f5 9.♘e2 c6 10.0-0 g5 11.♗g3 ♘xg3 12.♘xg3 a5 13.♕a4 b5 14.cxb6 ♗b7 15.♖ac1

♘xb6 16.♕d1 ♘d7 17.♖c3 ♗b4 18.♖c2 ♗d6 19.♕e2 ♕e7 20.♖fc1 ♖fc8 21.a3 h6 22.♖c3 c5 23.dxc5 ♖xc5 24.♘d4 ♖ac8

Analysis Diagram



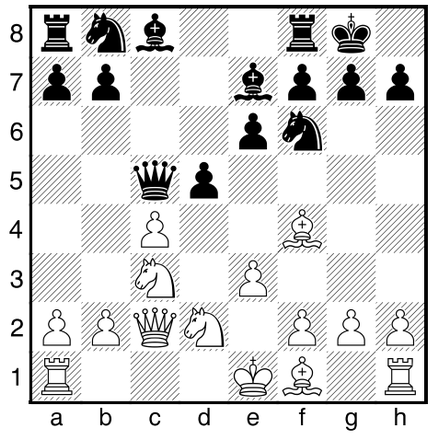
But here my old disease − poor tactical vision − raised its head and I did not find: 25.♕h5! ♕f6 26.♘xe6!!±; I considered only 26.♘xf5.

Instead, we drew after I played: 25.♗a6 25...♖xc3 26.♖xc3 ♖xc3 27.bxc3 ♘c5 28.♗xb7 ♕xb7 29.♕h5 ♗f8 30.♕g6+= ♕g7 31.♕e8 ♕f7 32.♕a8 a4 33.h3 ♕b7 34.♕e8 ♕e7 35.♕a8 ♕b7 36.♕e8 ♕d7 37.♕a8 ♕b7 ½-½ Bareev,E−Le,Q Baku, 2016.

6...c5

Also good are: 6...♘bd7 and 6...♘c6.

7.dxc5 ♕a5 8.♘d2 ♕xc5 9.e3



9...♗d7

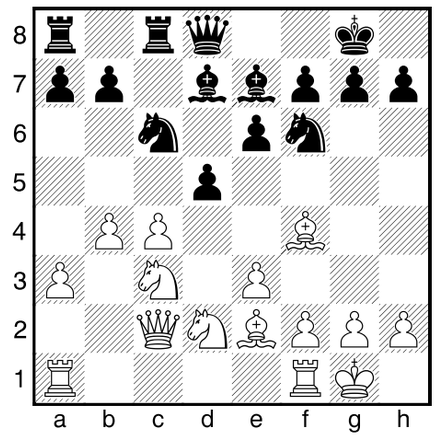
A bit too clever. Simpler was, 9...♘c6!, which would have been more threatening: 10.a3 e5 11.b4 ♕b6 12.♗g3 d4 13.c5 *(13.♘a4 ♕d8 14.♗e2 ♗g4∓)* 13...♕d8 14.♘d1 and Black looks better.

10.a3 ♖c8 11.b4 ♕b6

11...♕c6 12.♗e2 dxc4 13.b5 ♕c5 14.♗f3 ♘d5 15.♘de4⩲.

12.♗e2 ♘c6 13.0-0 ♕d8

13...d4 14.♘ce4 ♘xe4 15.♕xe4 e5 16.b5 exf4 17.bxc6 ♗xc6 18.♕xe7 dxe3 19.♖ab1±.



14.♖ad1?!

The problem was that I could not guess even a single move of my colleague and had little time (I think approximately 30 minutes left) at that moment. So I made a "Capablanca" move. Or so it seemed to me...

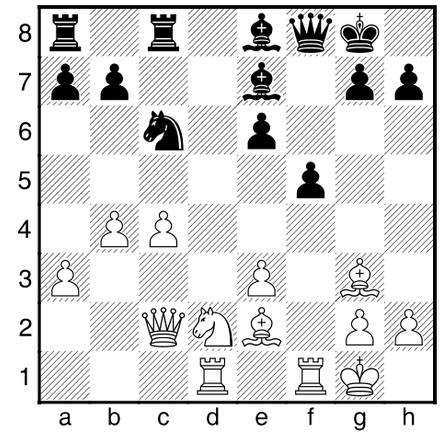
14.♗g3 d4 15.♘ce4 ♘xe4 16.♘xe4 e5 17.♘d2⩲;

14.♖fd1 d4 15.exd4 ♘xd4 16.♕d3 ♘xe2+ 17.♕xe2 ♕e8 18.♗e5 b6 19.b5 a6 20.a4.

14...♕f8?

Even worse. The simple 14... d4 15.♘ce4 ♘xe4 16.♘xe4 e5 17.♗g3 f5 18.b5 fxe4 19.♕xe4 ♗f6 *(editor − 19...♘a5? 20.♗xe5* and the tactics on the d−file leave Black worse.*)* 20.bxc6 ♗xc6 21.♕b1 ♕b6 equalized.

15.♗g3 d4 16.♘ce4 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 f5 18.♘d2 dxe3 19.fxe3 ♗e8



20.c5

20.♘e4 ♖d8 *(20...a5 21.b5)* 21.c5±.

20...♖d8 21.♘c4 ♖xd1 22.♖xd1 a6 23.♗f3

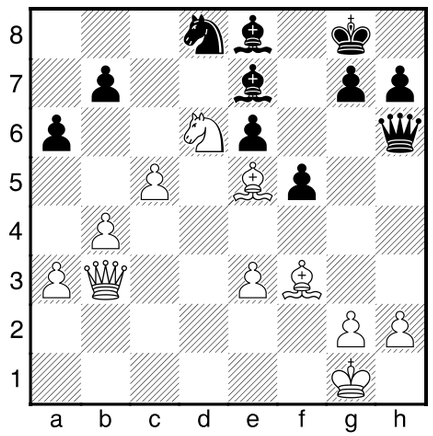
23.♘d6 ♗xd6 24.cxd6 ♗d7 25.♕c5 ♕f6 26.♕b6±.

23...♕f6 24.♕b3

An unnecessary move. Simpler was: 24.♘d6 ♗xd6 25.cxd6 ♗d7 26.h3±.

24...♖d8 25.♖xd8 ♘xd8

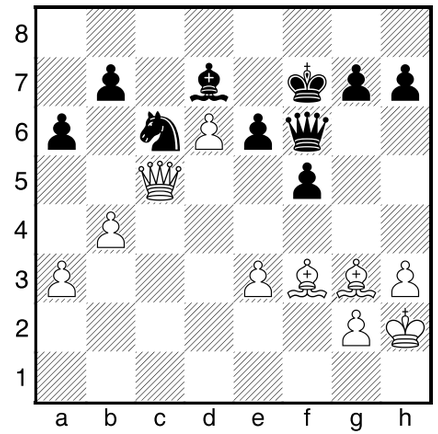
26.♗e5 ♕h6 27.♘d6



27...♗xd6

Black also had not much time, and did not even try to find: 27...♗a4!?. The complications are in White's favour nevertheless: 28.♕xa4 ♕xe3+ 29.♔f1 b5 *(29...♕xe5 30.♕e8+ ♗f8 31.♕xd8+-)* 30.cxb6 ♕xe5 31.♕e8+ ♗f8 32.♕xd8±.

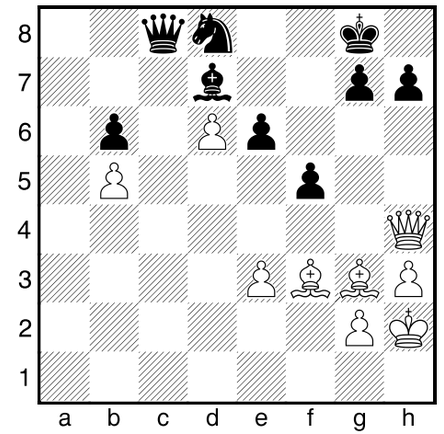
28.cxd6 ♘c6 29.♕c3 ♗d7 30.h3 ♔f7 31.♔h2 ♕g5 32.♗g3 ♕f6 33.♕c5±



33...♕d8 34.a4! b6 35.♕c4 ♕c8 36.♕h4

36.♗e2! a5 37.b5 ♘b4 38.♕h4+-.

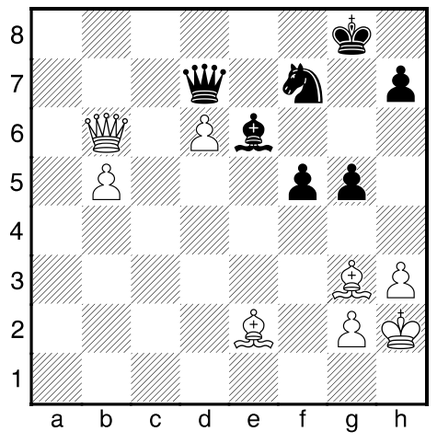
36...♔g8 37.b5 axb5 38.axb5 ♘d8



39.e4! ♘f7 40.exf5 exf5 41.♗e2

41.♕e7!? ♗xb5 42.♗d5 ♕e8 43.♕xe8+ ♗xe8 44.♗e6+-.

41...g5 42.♕d4 ♗e6



43.♕xb6 ♕d7

44.♗h5

44.♕b8+ ♔g7 45.b6 f4 46.♗f2 ♕xd6 47.♕a7 f3+ 48.♗g3 fxe2 49.♗xd6 e1♕ 50.b7+-.

44...f4 45.♗xf7+??

It could have been a good hunt... but Akela missed the shot. The move 45.♗f2! fell out of my sight completely. After 45...f3 46.♕b8+ ♔g7 47.♗d4+ ♔h6 48.♗xf3 ♕xd6+ 49.♕xd6 ♘xd6 50.b6+- White wins.

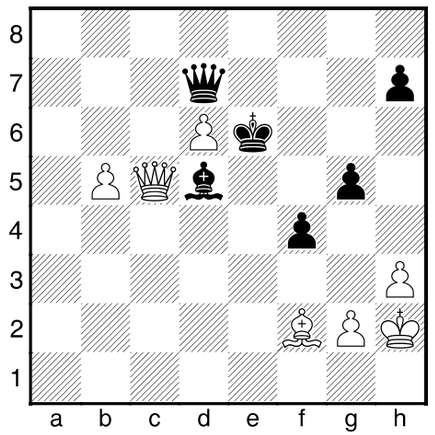
45...♔xf7 46.♗f2

I think even 46.♗e1 does not give any chances: 46...♗d5 47.♗b4 ♔g6=.

46...♗d5 47.♕c5 ♔e6=

Canada - Denmark

Bareev, Kovalyov, Hansen, Krnan.



48.b6 ♕xd6 49.♕c8+ ♕d7 50.♕h8 ♗b7 51.♕g8+ ♔f5 52.♕f8+ ♔g6 53.♕g8+ ♔f5 54.h4 h6 55.hxg5
A great disappointment from an advantageous QGD.

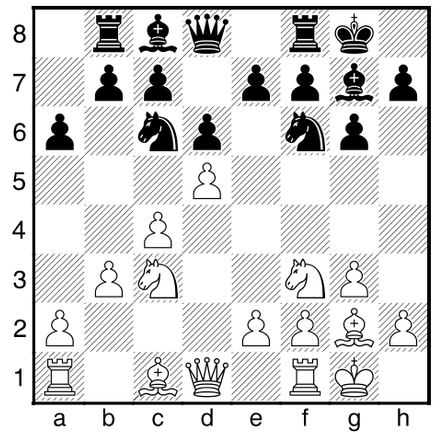
½-½

Notes by IM Tomas Krnan

Schandorff,Lars (2515)
Krnan,Tomas (2430)
E63
42nd Olympiad Baku (9.4), 11.09.2016

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.c4 d6 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.♘c3 a6 8.b3 ♖b8

9.d5

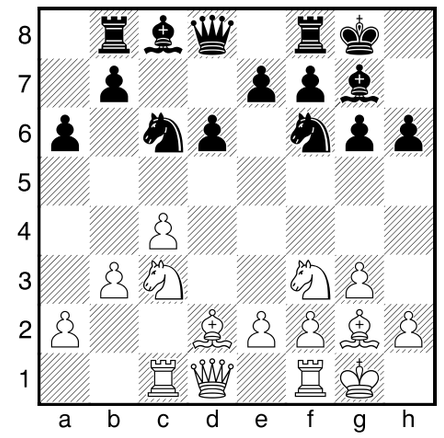


I have played many games in the Panno variation of the King's Indian Defense over the past two years, but I was unfamiliar with this specific move order. The d4-d5 advance is one of the main alternatives for White on move 8 (along with 8.b3), but after 8.b3 ♖b8, the two most popular continuations by far are 9.♘d5 and 9.♗b2. (I have annotated a game with 9.♗b2 earlier – see Buscar–Krnan from the Canadian Closed 2015 in *Chess Canada* 2015.8).

However, my opponent was a very experienced grandmaster and playing the opening quickly, so I knew this sideline must have been prepared...

9...♘a5 10.♗g5
It's not clear if prompting ...h7-h6 benefits White or Black. 10.♗d2 at once was another alternative.

10...h6 11.♗d2 c5 12.dxc6 ♘xc6 13.♖c1



13...♗e6?!
The first of a series of doubtful moves from me. By threatening d6-d5 and solving all opening problems, I wanted to encourage White to play 14.e2-e4, after which Black can continue 14....♕d7 followed by ...♗h3 with a good position. However, White is not obliged to play this way.

Better was: 13...♗f5 14.♘e1 ♕d7 15.♘d5 ♘e4 16.♗e3 h5 with complex position.

14.♘e1!
A logical and strong multi–purpose move. It prevents d6-d5 and supports ♘c3-d5, while the other knight transfers to d3 where it will support the c4-c5 advance.

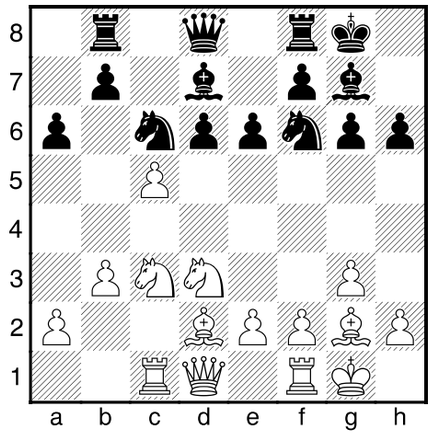
14...♗d7
Allowing ♘c3-d5 with bishop being on e6 would be unpleasant, so admitting my mistake on the previous move was necessary.

14...♗f5 was also an option, but Black isn't fully equalizing anymore after 15.♘d3 ♕d7 *(15...e5 16.e4 ♗g4 17.f3 ♗e6 18.♗e3±)* 16.♘d5 ♘e4 17.♗e3±.

15.♘d3 e6?
Protecting the d5 square and planning to solidify with ...♕e7, but again underestimating the strength of White's next move.

15...♖c8 was better, for example 16.h3 *(16.c5 ♗f5 17.e4 ♗g4 18.f3 ♗e6=)* 16...♖e8 17.♗e3 h5 18.♕d2 ♗f5 and Black is only slightly worse.

16.c5



16...♘e5!?

In a tough position I chose a move that is objectively not the strongest, but it turned out to be a good practical bluff.

16...dxc5 17.♘xc5! *(17.♗f4?! b6! 18.♗xb8 ♕xb8* followed by ♖d8 and Black has almost sufficient positional compensation for the exchange*.)* 17...♕e7 18.♘xd7 ♘xd7 *(18...♕xd7 19.♗f4 ♖bc8 20.♘a4 ♖fd8 21.♕xd7 ♘xd7 22.♖fd1±)* 19.♗xc6! bxc6 20.♕c2 and long suffering lies ahead for Black.

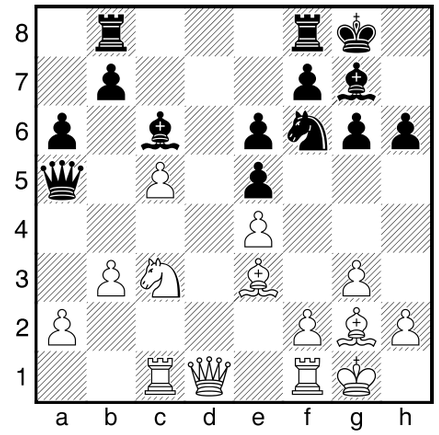
16...d5 17.♗f4 ♖a8 18.♕d2 ♔h7 19.♗d6 followed by e2-e4 and Black is again suffering greatly without any counterplay.

17.♘xe5?

And the bluff was successful. White makes an incorrect positional assessment that his pawn majority on the queenside and Black's doubled e−pawns will secure him lasting advantage, which optically might look like the case.

As a result, he probably only briefly looked at 17.cxd6 ♘xd3 18.exd3, where it appears that Black will easily get the d6 pawn back and White will also be left with a weakness on d3. However, White's d6 pawn is actually impossible to recover in a convenient way for Black, making it a very strong pawn instead: 17.cxd6! ♘xd3 18.exd3 ♘e8 *(18...♕b6 19.♕e1!±)* 19.♘e4 ♗c6 *(19...f5 20.♘c5 ♘xd6 21.♖e1 ♖e8 22.d4!±* and Black's position seems almost unplayable*.)* 20.d7! followed by ♗b4.

17...dxe5 18.e4 ♗c6 19.♗e3 ♕a5!



And suddenly Black's pieces begin to occupy excellent squares.

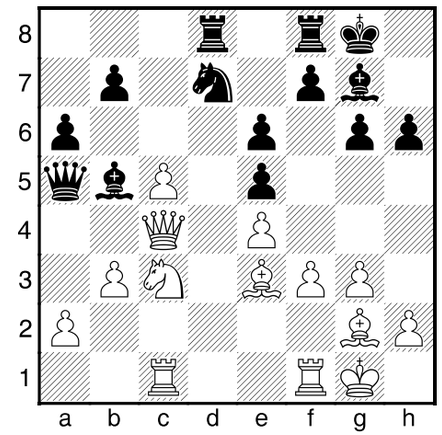
Without the bishop on b2, White's queenside is actually very vulnerable. Pawns on c5 and a2, as well as the knight on c3, all have to be protected. White was hoping to create a passer by advancing his pawns to a4 and b5, but the queen on a5 prevents all of it. Meanwhile, the doubled e−pawns are strong as they control the very important squares d4 and d5.

20.♕e2 ♖bd8

Clearing the b8−square for a knight maneuver.

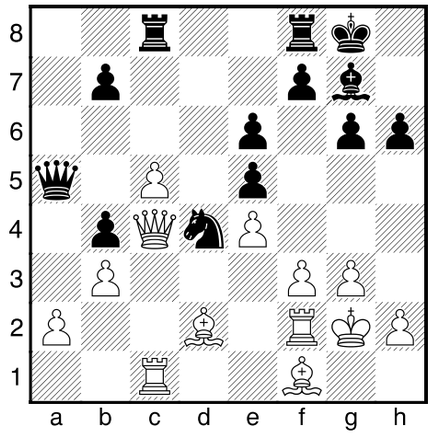
20...♖fd8 was also interesting, for example 21.f3 ♗f8 *(21...♖d4!?∞)* 22.♕c4 ♘d5! 23.exd5 exd5 24.b4 ♕a3 25.♕b3 ♕xb3 26.axb3 d4 27.♗d2 dxc3 28.♗xc3=.

21.f3 ♘d7 22.♕c4 ♗b5!



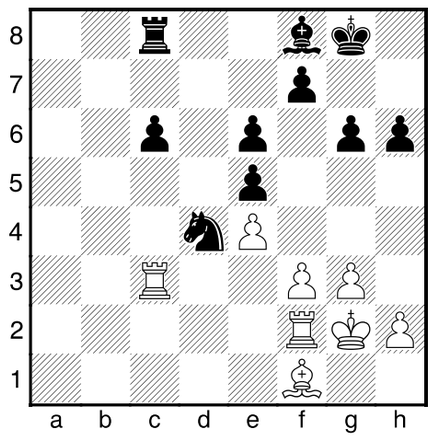
Excellent reply. Black clears path for his knight to transfer to d4, while at the same time preventing the advance of White's queenside pawns. Despite two doubled pawns and White's bishop pair, Black is not worse at all.

23.♘xb5 axb5 24.♕c3 b4 25.♕c4 ♘b8! 26.♖f2 ♘c6 27.♗f1 ♘d4 28.♔g2 ♖c8 29.♗d2!



White uses a nice tactical resource to force a liquidation into an unbalanced but equal endgame. Any other move would result in Black getting the upper hand, as ...♖fd8 followed by ...b6 or even ...b5! was threatened.

29...♕xa2 30.♗xb4 ♕xb3 31.♕xb3 ♘xb3 32.♖c3 ♘d4 33.c6 bxc6 34.♗xf8 ♗xf8



A forced sequence has resulted in an endgame that is objectively equal and should result in a fairly easy draw. But my opponent perhaps thought he was still somewhat better and tried to play actively, losing his own sense of danger...

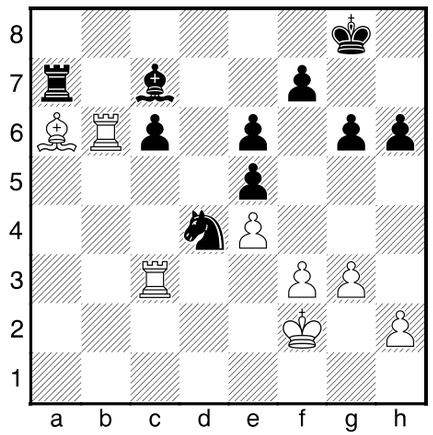
35.♖b2 ♖c7 36.♗a6 ♖a7 37.♖b6?!

37.♖a2= giving up the b−file, but not giving Black's rook an open file either.

37...♗d6 38.♔f2?!

38.♗c4 was more advisable.

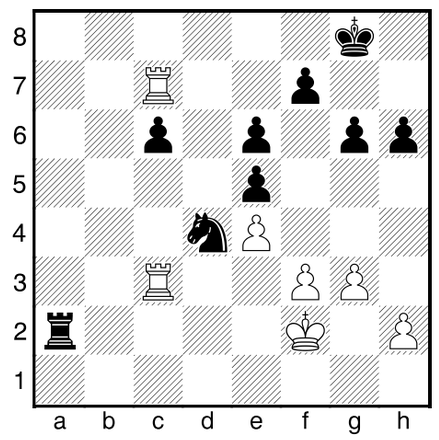
38...♗c7!



39.♖b7

Perhaps White thought that the exchange of the bishops benefits him? It should be noted, however, that 39.♖bxc6 is not a dead draw: 39.♖bxc6 ♗a5! 40.♖c8+ ♔g7 41.♖3c6 ♘xc6 42.♖xc6 ♖d7 43.♖c2 ♗b6+ 44.♔g2 ♖d1∓ and Black can still try without any risk.

39...♖xa6 40.♖xc7 ♖a2+

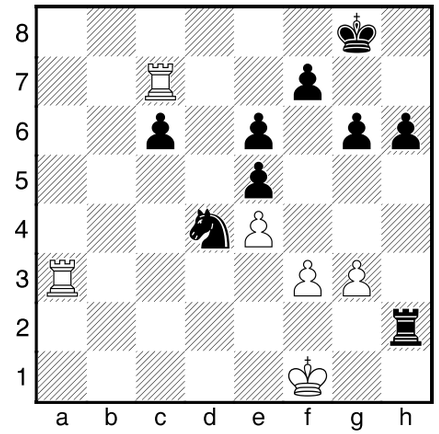


41.♔e3?

A mistake, after which White is more or less lost.

<u>41.♔f1!</u> was necessary, preventing Black's rook from getting to the f3−pawn, after which White is able to create counterplay against the f7−pawn: <u>41...♖xh2 42.♖a3</u>:

Analysis Diagram



42...♘b5 43.♖a8+ ♔g7 44.♖d7 *(44.♖xc6 ♘d4 45.♖c3 h5 46.♖e3 ♔f6 47.♖a5 g5* and Black still retains winning chances.*)* 44... h5 45.♖e8 ♘d4 46.♖ee7 ♔h6 47.♖xf7 ♘e2 48.g4 (*editor* − 48.f4 threatens mate and looks like it might leave Black's pieces hanging, but the tactics are actually good for Black: 48...♘xg3+ 49.♔g1 ♖h1+ 50.♔g2 exf4 51.♖xf4 ♘e2!∓ *or 51...h4!?.*) 48...h4 49.♖h7+ ♔g5 50.♖d2! ♘g3+ 51.♔e1 ♖h1+ 52.♔f2 c5 53.♔g2= seems to hold for White.

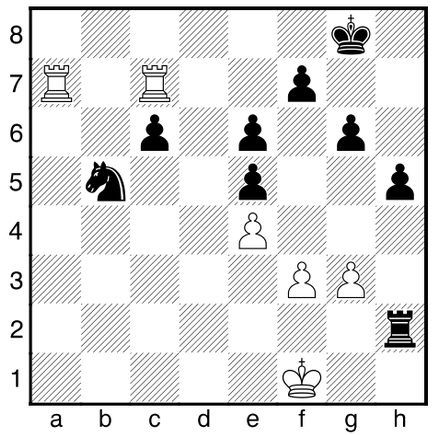
<u>42...h5</u>:

43.♖a8+ ♔g7 44.♖aa7 ♔h6 45.♖xf7 ♘e2 46.g4 h4 47.♖a5 ♘f4! 48.♖d7 h3 49.♖xe5 g5!

50.♖d6 ♖c2 51.♔g1 ♔g7! and White needs study−like precision to force a draw: 52.♖xg5+ ♔f6 53.♖f5+! *(53.♖a5? ♖g2+ 54.♔h1 ♘e2)* 53...♔e7 54.♖xf4 ♔xd6 55.♖f8! ♖g2+ *(55...♔e5 56.♖h8 ♔f4 57.♖xh3 c5 58.♖h6=)* 56.♔h1 c5 57.♖h8 c4 58.♖xh3 ♖e2 59.f4! ♖xe4 60.g5 ♖xf4 61.♖g3 ♔e7 62.g6 ♔f8 63.g7+ ♔g8 64.♔g2 ♖f7 65.♖e3 ♖xg7+ 66.♔f3=)

43.♖aa7 ♘b5:

Analysis Diagram



44.♖a8+ ♔g7 45.♖xc6 ♘d4 46.♖c3 ♘e2 47.♖c7 ♘xg3+ 48.♔g1 ♖d2 49.♖aa7 ♔f6 50.♖xf7+ ♔g5 and Black retains good practical winning chances.

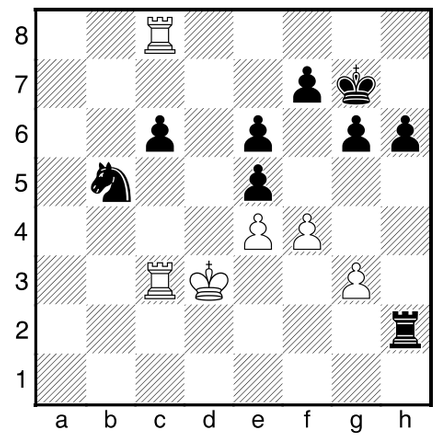
44.♖c8+ ♔g7 45.♖d7 ♘d4! 46.♖cc7 ♘e2 47.♖xf7+ ♔h6 48.♖xc6 ♘xg3+ 49.♔g1 ♖a2 50.♖xe6 ♔g5! 51.♖g7 *(51.♖xe5+?? ♔h4* followed by ♔h3 -+.*)* 51...♘e2+ 52.♔f1 ♘f4 53.♖xe5+ ♔h4∓ followed by ...♔g3 and despite the temporary material deficit it is still Black who is pushing.

From the above variations it is clear that Black has the upper hand even after 41.♔f1 and White seems to hold only with very precise play.

41...♖e2+! 42.♔d3 ♖xh2 43.f4

There is nothing better.

43...♘b5 44.♖c8+ ♔g7



45.♖c5

45.♖c2 ♖h3-+.

45.♖3xc6 ♖g2 46.♖b6 ♖xg3+ 47.♔d2 ♘d4 48.fxe5 ♘f3+ 49.♔e3 ♖h3-+ is a technical win.

45...♖g2 46.♖xe5

46.fxe5 would have taken longer to convert, but after 46...♖xg3+ 47.♔c4 h5 Black is also winning. The text move allows a beautiful example of chess geometry.

46...♖xg3+ 47.♔e2 ♘d4+

48.♔e1

48.♔f2 ♖f3+ 49.♔g2 ♖xf4-+ is hopeless.

48...♖e3+! 49.♔d1 ♖h3!

Threatening 50....♖h1+, after which Black forks the rook everywhere on the 5th rank: ♔d2 ♘f3+ when the rook stays on e5, or ♘b3+ when the rook moves to either c5 or a5! Therefore White's next move is forced...

50.♔c1 f6!

A very aesthetic final position. All of Black's pawns are on 6th rank, covering all 5th rank squares except two. And Black's knight takes care of the rook on either of those two squares with ...♘b3+.

White only has a few checks available, therefore...

0-1

Round 10: Canada 3 - Latvia 1

There is 40 minutes between the announcement of pairings and the team meeting, but we didn't need it. The decision about our line-up was easy: we continued with the same "Eric with White" strategy. I spent some time analyzing the tournament situation. Unfortunately for us, I could not find any realistic scenario where a win in our match against Latvia would not pair us with Russia or the USA in the final round. The option with USA in the final round was much more likely of the two, and the USA would probably be playing us with the gold medal on the line.

A draw in round 10 could give us comfortable opponents in the last round, but we did not want to think about the idea of intentionally playing for a draw against Latvia.

Latvia had been playing well in the tournament. They beat Hungary and Netherlands. Their board 2 player, GM Kovalenko was leading the team with a very strong performance and 7/9 points. The winner of the "Kovalyov-Kovalenko" game would most likely get a medal for individual performance on board 2.

Our match with Latvia was very similar to our match with Cuba. Again, it was a great win for Anton against a dangerous opponent. Evgeny could not hold the game with Black, this time against Alexei Shirov. Eric gave his opponent some chances at the end of the game, but Black did not take advantage of this opportunity. Once again, the decisive game of the match was the game on board 3, where Alex was Black against a 2600+ player.

In the two previous Olympiads we beat the higher-rated team only once: in 2012 we beat Kazakhstan. At the same time, we never lost to a lower-rated opponent. We made 3 draws against stronger teams and 2 draws against lower-rated teams. This data proves that it is very difficult to have a surprise win against a higher-rated team, as it usually requires at least two surprise results in one match.

It was one of the most important games in Baku and Alex played extremely well. His opponent did not get an advantage from the opening. The players traded queens on move 9. Later, White sacrificed a pawn to create threats to Alex's king. Alex found a few strong moves and his king was placed on a safe square: h5. Alex forced White to trade the rooks and bishops and the game transposed to a knight ending with an extra pawn for Alex. I was not sure if an extra pawn would be enough for a win for Black, but White had absolutely no chance to win. At this moment, the score was 2-1 in our favour, so a draw would have given us a win in the match. Alex played precisely until the very end and beat a solid opponent, who had not lost in any previous round.

With 15 team points after 10 rounds, (+5) we shared 4th-10th place before the last round. USA's round 10 win against Georgia was no surprise, so I was almost sure that we would play against USA on board 1 in the last round.

- Victor Plotkin

Shirov,Alexei (2673) Bareev,Evgeny (2675)

B12
42nd Olympiad Baku (10.1), 12.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

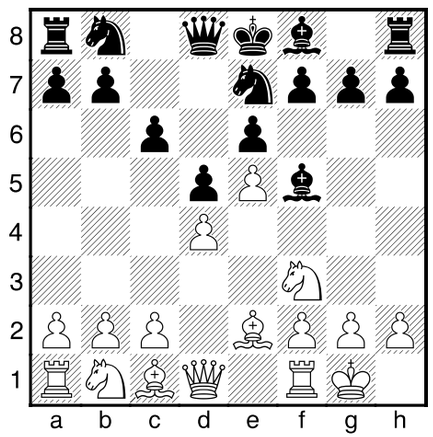
This is a deceptively deep game.

Shirov is known and loved for his attacking play. But you don't get opportunities to attack unless you can exploit small advantages well enough that opponents avoid such positions and risk

playing double-edged positions against you. In this game, Shirov shows that he can create a small positional plus, and turn it into a very smooth-looking win.... and in doing so he gives future opponents reason to pause before adopting a solid-but-passive opening against him.

You might never be able to learn to play combinations like Shirov, but I think you can learn a lot from this game.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.♘f3 e6 5.♗e2 ♘e7 6.0-0



Since 2010, Shirov has scored 8.5/9 from this position, conceding only one draw: to Anand in a rapid game. This might explain Black's next strange−looking move, which Shirov had never before faced.

6...♘c8

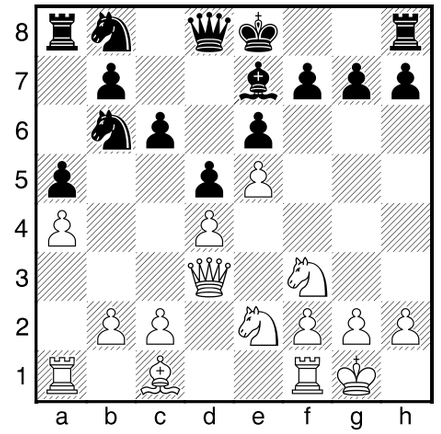
GM Vladimir Burmakin has played this many times. The idea is to play ...♘b6 to discourage c2-c4, then finish developing with ...♗e7 before deciding to break with ...c5 or ...f6

7.♗d3!?

Shirov spent 18:49 on this Novelty.

7.b3 is a principled move, planning to attack d5 without allowing Black to create an outpost there. 7...♗e7 8.c4 0-0 9.♘c3 ♘d7 10.♗d3 ♗xd3 11.♕xd3± White has more space and easier development, and the c4-pawn gives extra options if Black tries to break with ...f6 or ...c5; see: Maze,S (2628)−Burmakin,V (2549) Helsingor, 2016 (1-0, 53).

7...♗xd3 8.♕xd3 ♘b6 9.a4 a5 10.♘c3 ♗e7 11.♘e2



11...♘6d7

Black prepares French−style counterplay with ...c5 and ♘s on d7 and c6. 11...0-0 and ...c5 are both reasonable too.

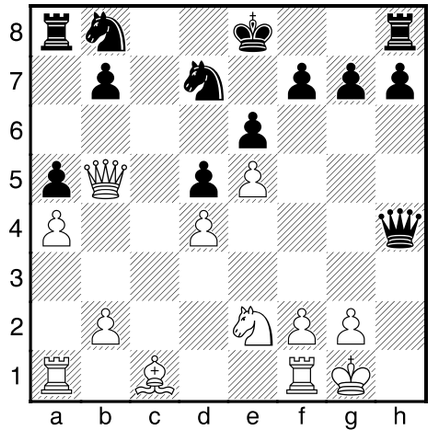
12.h4!?

(13:41) Computers don't like this, but it's a pretty standard idea, creating the positional threat of ♗g5, trading White's bad ♗ and preparing to go after Black's weakened dark squares.

12...c5 13.c3 cxd4 14.cxd4 ♗xh4 15.♘xh4 ♕xh4 16.♕b5

RU Bareev enough?

... to play the Caro vs Shirov?

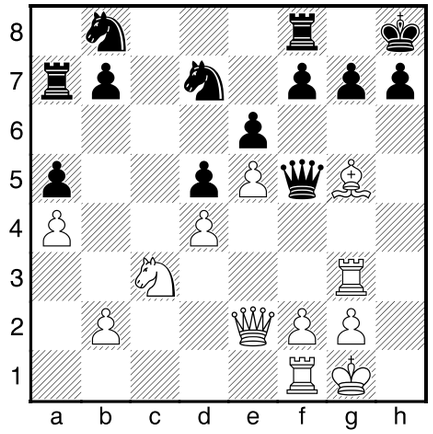


16...♖a7
Perhaps not a good sign that Black spent 7 minutes on this move after taking only 1:31 on ...♗xh4.

16...b6 is possible, but makes it hard to develop the queenside and doesn't allow Black to block the c−file on c6.

17.♖a3 0-0 18.♖g3 ♔h8 19.♗g5 ♕e4 20.♘c3 ♕f5
20...♕xd4?? 21.♗e3 skewers the ♖a7.

21.♕e2

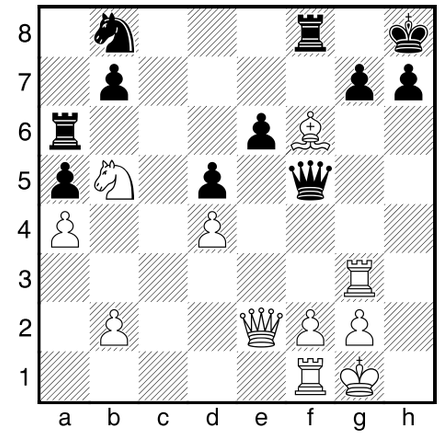


The position resembles an Alekhine−Chatard attack in the French, where White gives up his h−pawn to trade dark−square ♗s and get a lead in development. One big difference is that here White still has his own DSB. So Black reasonably tries to fight for some dark squares with...

21...f6
21...♖a6 22.♗e7 ♖e8 *(22...♖c8 23.♘b5±)* 23.♗a3 ♘c6 24.♘b5±.

22.♘b5?!
White gets a bigger advantage with the direct 22.exf6 ♘xf6 *(22...gxf6? 23.♗h6 ♖g8 24.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 25.g4+-* wins the e6-pawn and Black collapses.*)* 23.♗xf6 ♕xf6 *(23...♖xf6? 24.♖f3+- ♕g6 (24...♕g4 25.♖xf6+-) 25.♕xe6+-)* 24.♖f3 ♕d8 25.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 26.♕xe6±.

22...♖a6 23.exf6 ♘xf6 24.♗xf6



24...♖xf6
All three recaptures are equally good, and White keeps a plus due to his pressure on the e−file.

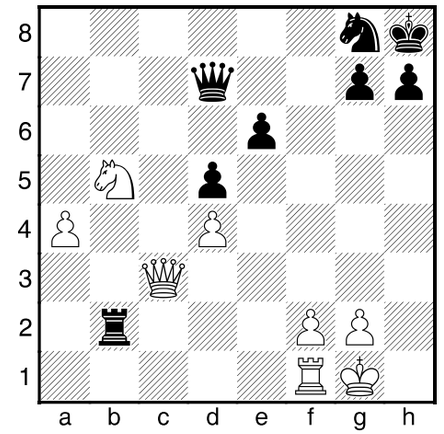
25.♖f3 ♕g6 26.♕e5! ♘d7 27.♖xf6!
27.♖c3 ♖c6 28.♖xc6 bxc6 29.♕c7 ♘f8=.

27...♘xf6 28.♕b8+!
≤28.♕c7 also wins the b−pawn, but after 28...♖a8 29.♕xb7 ♖f8∞ and Black gets some play with ...♘h5-f4.
28...♕e8□ 29.♕xb7 ♖c6

30.♘c7!
A nice little two−step maneuver, after which...

30...♕d7 31.♕a8+ ♘g8 32.♘b5
...White wins the a−pawn and has deactivated Black's ♘.

32...♖c2 33.♕xa5 ♖xb2 34.♕c3!

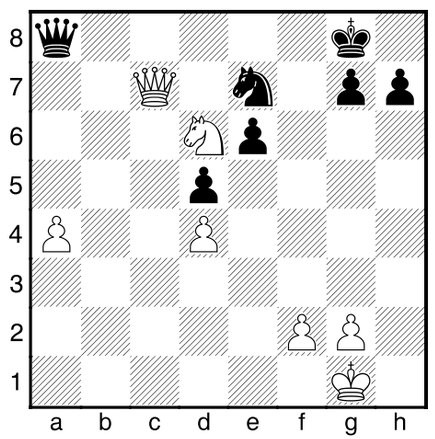


34...♖e2
Material is equal, but White's outside passer and much better ♘ give him a large advantage. No better was 34...♖a2 35.♕b3 ♖e2 36.a5+-.

35.♖e1
Safety first?
35.♖a1! leaves the Black rook

looking more dangerous than it is: 35...♕f7 *(Δ35...♘f6 36.♕b3 ♘e4 37.♘c3!+-* threatening mate and the ♖.*)* 36.♕f3!+- Black would be fine if his ♘ was on a5, but with the ♘ on g8 he's just lost: 36...♕xf3 37.gxf3 ♖b2 38.♘d6 — threatening mate! — 38...♘e7 39.a5 ♖b8 40.a6 ♖a8 41.a7 ♘c6 42.♖a6 ♘xa7 43.♘b5+-.

35...♖xe1+ 36.♕xe1 ♘e7 37.♕b4 ♔g8 38.♕c5 ♕d8 39.♘d6 ♕a8 40.♕c7



40...♘f5

40...♔f8 41.♕d7 wins e6 with huge threats.

40...♘f5 41.♕f7+ ♔h8 42.♘e8 h6 43.♕f8+ ♔h7 44.♘f6+ wins the ♕a8.

1-0

Kovalyov,Anton (2617)
Kovalenko,Igor (2651)
A20

42nd Olympiad Baku (10.18), 12.09.2016

Notes by Elias Oussedik

I am honoured to have the opportunity to annotate this game for the CFC Newsfeed. This was Canada's best showing at the Olympiad, ever. This was Canada's 10th round match vs Latvia. Kovalyov, playing on board 2, was playing Kovalenko, a former 2700 player. Kovalenko is known as a streaky player while Kovalyov is as solid as they get.

1.c4

Kovalyov rarely changes his openings. He usually opts for his 1.c4 English.

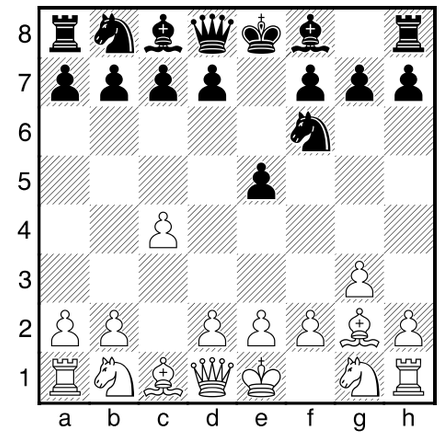
1...e5

A reversed Sicilian.

2.g3

1.c4 and 2.g3, Kovalyov's pet line.

2...♘f6 3.♗g2



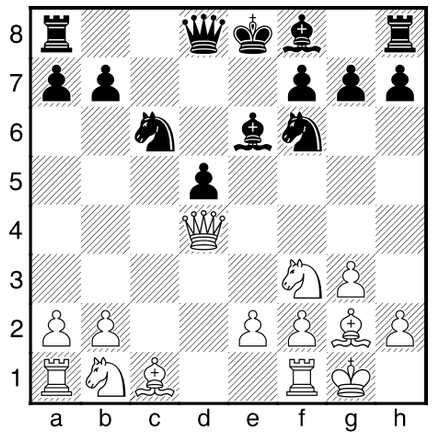
3...c6

An interesting nuance. Normally, Black continues 3...d5 transposing to a true reversed Sicilian. 3...c6 is logical. Black intends to continue with 4...d5 and build an impressive pawn mass.

3...d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.d3 0-0 9.♗e3 ♗e6 10.♖c1 f6 11.a3± A main *tabiya* of sorts. Numerous move−orders have been essayed.

4.d4
Kovalyov is known as a speedster at the board. Many players are impressed by the speed at which he makes his moves. 4.d4 took him 28 seconds, an eternity by Anton's standards!

4...exd4 5.♕xd4 d5 6.♘f3 ♗e6 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.0-0 ♘c6



All natural and sensible. Personally, I prefer White's position. He has a clear target in the d5-pawn. This position vaguely resembles a Tarrasch. White intends to develop his pieces naturally and plant a piece on d4 to blockade Black's d5 pawn. Meanwhile, Black intends to utilize his active pieces and either manage to push the d5-pawn to d4 or to utilize the e and c−files to his advantage.

9.♕d3
A novelty! Prepared novelty, or an at−the−board novelty? Looking at the time it took Kovalyov to make the move, it would seem like a prepared novelty: it took him all but a cool 14 seconds to gently retreat his queen to the d3-square.

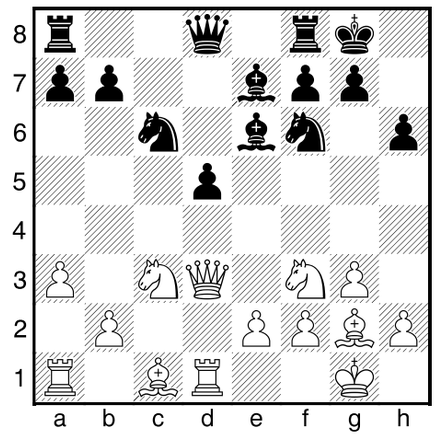
9.♕a4 ♗c5 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗xf6 ♕xf6 12.♘c3 0-0= This is the mainline. Kovalenko has numerous games on the black side. This further supports the idea that Kovalyov's 9.♕d3 was indeed a novelty prepared at home prior to the game.
I personally feel that Black's position here is completely acceptable and that he has equalized. His active pieces fully compensate for his weak d5 pawn.

9...h6
Preventing the possibility of a White bishop installing himself on g5 and exchanging himself for the f6 knight, the guardian of the d5 pawn.

10.a3
Preventing any possible ...♘b4 tricks.

10...♗e7 11.♘c3
White intends to play a ♘b5-d4 maneuver and slowly activate his rooks to the c1 and d1 squares.

11...0-0 12.♖d1

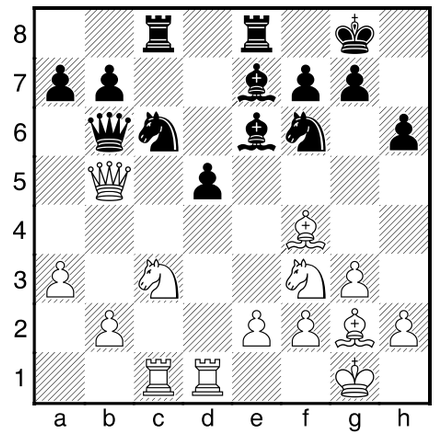


Kovalyov is playing bully. He is "ganging−up" on the weak d5 pawn.

12...♖c8 13.♗f4 ♖e8
As mentioned before, Black's idea in this opening is to use the c and e files to his advantage.

14.♖ac1 ♕b6
14...a6 would have been normal. It accomplished two goals:
1) Prevents a white knight from using the b5 square to maneuver to d4, and,
2) Prevents the ensuing ♕b5 that occurs after Black's 14...♕b6.

15.♕b5!



A well known idea in these positions. The dynamic potential of the isolated queen pawn (IQP) is greatly diminished once pieces are exchanged. With queens exchanged, White's advantage only grows.

15...♘a5?
Black is trying to utilize the c4 square for his knight. A mistake

considering that after White takes on b6 Black is left with "nasty" pawns on b6 and b7. Not only the pawns, but the squares. A permanent outpost for a White knight is secured on b5.

15...♕xb5 would have been a more prudent approach. 16.♘xb5 ♘e4 17.♘fd4 ♘xd4 18.♘xd4 White is slightly better here. This is a typical IQP position. White will try to exchange pieces while keeping rooks on the board and attempt to create a "second weakness". With one weakness, the d5−pawn, it is not enough to win. With the creation of a second weakness, which can be accomplished by pushing his kingside pawns and creating a passed pawn, White would have clear winning chances.

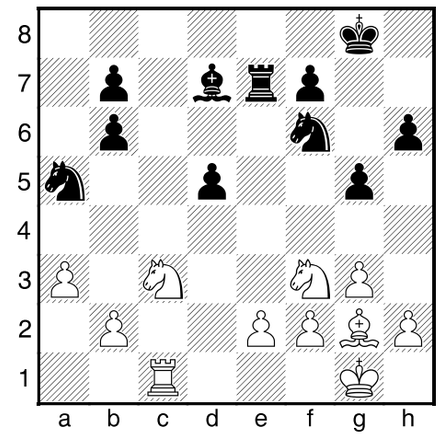
16.♕xb6 axb6 17.♘b5±
After 17 moves, White is better. No doubt about it: a beautiful knight on b5 coupled with Black's weak pawns.

17...g5
Kovalenko realized he was in trouble and spent 20 minutes coming up with this move.

The idea is not clear. White will continue with his plan of exchanging pieces and will continue 18. ♗d6.

18.♗d6 ♖xc1 19.♖xc1 ♗d7 20.♗xe7 ♖xe7
Logical chess. Exchange pieces to negate all of Black's potential dynamic play.

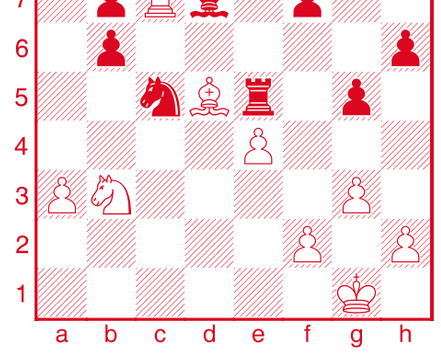
21.♘c3!±



Exclamation mark for the counter−intuitive nature of the move. I had previously mentioned that typically in such positions, the knight should reroute itself to d4 to blockade the d−pawn. However, in this case, the d−pawn is such a weakness that White intends to attack and win it! He intends to bring his f3-knight to d4 and thus be attacking the d5 pawn with two pieces, notably the g2-bishop which has just been unleashed.

21...♘c4 22.♘d4 ♘xb2 23.♘xd5 ♘xd5 24.♗xd5 ♖e5 25.e4
Note Black's weak pawns.. yuck! White's rook will soon invade on the 7th.

25...♘a4 26.♖c7 ♘c5 27.♘b3



Removing the defender of the d7-bishop. Fischer first introduced us to the Rook+Bishop vs Rook+Knight domination and this is precisely what Kovalyov is aiming for.

27...♗c6?
A blunder. Take a second and try to find how White can win the exchange. Not an easy solution.

27...♘xb3 28.♖xd7 ♘c5 29.♖c7 ♘xe4 30.♗xf7+ ♔f8 31.♗g6 ♘c5± would have offered better resistance, although White still is better with his better pawn structure and better pieces.

28.♘xc5!
It took Kovalyov a mere 35 seconds to play this move.

28...bxc5
28...♗xd5 29.♘d7 ♖xe4 30.♘f6++-.

29.f4
Where does the rook go?

29...♗xd5
29...♖e8 30.♗xf7++-.

30.fxe5 ♗xe4 31.♔f2 ♗c6 32.♖xc6!
A cute way to finish the game. The a−pawn will queen. A logical and frankly speaking, easy game for Kovalyov.

Coupled with a Hansen and Le Siege win, Canada won the match 3-1 vs Latvia, and impressive showing. This led for quite the thrilling finale − Canada vs USA on Board 1!

1-0

Round 11: Canada 1.5 - USA 2.5

It was a great accomplishment for the Canadian Team to finish the Olympiad on the 1st board. However, psychologically, the tournament situation was not so comfortable. If the tournament had finished after the 10 round, we would have placed 4th, due to our excellent tie break. In the last round we had a very slim chance to improve our standing: we would have been awarded the bronze only if we defeated the USA and Russia lost to Italy. I believed that we had some chances to surprise USA, but Italy had absolutely no chances to beat Russia. So, even with a victory over the Olympiad leaders, the final standings would not have improved for us. At the same time, a draw would have sent us to the 5th-6th position, according to my calculations. As it turned out, a draw would have been good enough for 4th place. A loss would have sent us outside of the top-10. So we had much more to lose in the last round than we had to gain.

Before the last round, the USA was tied for first with Ukraine with 18 team points, and they had a slightly better tie break than Ukraine, so if the two teams had the same result for the last round, the Olympiad gold would likely go to the Americans. Russia, with 16 points, barely had any chance to win the Olympiad.

The beginning of the match with USA was not too promising. Evgeny was under pressure from the opening against Caruana, the second best player in the world. Our position on the second board was around equal. Interestingly, Anton played against Nakamura two years ago, also as White. That time Anton got a big advantage and won a pawn, but Hikaru survived. This time, Nakamura played very cautiously, despite having a 150 FIDE rating point advantage. It looked like a draw on the second board was part of the team strategy for the Americans. I did not like Alex's position most of the time, and he was also in serious time trouble. Eric decided to decline a possible 3-fold repetition, gained an extra pawn, but Black had some compensation.

With a loss on board 1 and a draw on board 2, the score was 0.5-1.5 for the USA. Eric improved his position and was very close to achieving another victory. On board 3 Wesley So started playing on Alex's time trouble and made a few weak moves. At some moment, Alex got a better position, but was still very low on time. Unfortunately, Alex could not find the best continuation and lost. Eric won, and we lost for only the 3rd time at the Olympiad to a very good team with the same narrow score: 1.5-2.5

- Victor Plotkin

Notes by GM Alexandre Le Siège

So,Wesley (2782)
Le Siège,Alexandre (2512)
B13
42nd Olympiad Baku (11.3), 14.09.2016

This was the 11th and final round of the Olympiad and Canada was playing board 1 against the United States.

The stakes were pretty high: a win by the United States would mean a gold medal for them, and a win for Canada would give us 4th place. As it turned out a draw would also have secured 4th place, because of other teams' results, since our tie-break was through the roof. The second tie-break (after matches won) is calculated by multiplying the number of points scored against a country by the number of games they won. Since we beat a lot of teams 4–0 and lost by the smallest margins in our defeats, we would be ahead of most of the teams at the finish line.

My task wasn't easy: I was playing Black against the in-form Wesley So, rated 7th in the world who just achieved a smooth victory in the Sinquefield cup 2016, arguably one of the strongest tournaments in the world. We didn't have much time to prepare since the last round was being played at 11 am instead of the usual 3pm. I just did a quick preparation trying to find any obvious holes in my repertoire. The task was complicated by the fact that So has a very balanced repertoire, alternating between 1.e4, 1.d4, and 1.c4/♘f3.

I was going to face the strongest player I ever played. Prior to this, I held Topalov to a draw some 15 years ago at the Olympiad. Obviously I was a little nervous and was realistically afraid of getting smashed out in the opening. I was joking with Tomas Krnan the night before that I would be live on stream in time trouble by move 12th in a completely hopeless position. Fortunately, things turned out much better for me than that, as you will soon see.

1.c4
A pleasant surprise, I feel it's easier to solve one's problem vs 2700 players against this move than 1. d4 or 1.e4.

Everybody had been playing 1.c4 against me in this Olympiad, presumably because I've had some terrible theoretical gap in my games... 15 years ago.
In fact I did! (see for example my game against Ftacnik).
On the other hand, it's a little presumptuous to think I wouldn't have worked on this part of my repertoire. Actually, I equalized pretty comfortably against 1.c4 in all my games, and whatever troubles I got were due to my poor play in the middlegame.

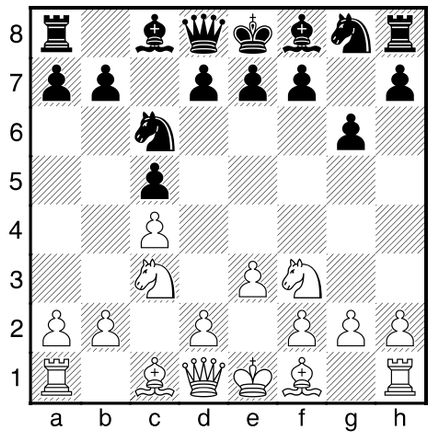
1...c5
I think it was Bologan who said: against 1.e4 the best move is 1.e5, against 1.d4 d5 and against 1.c4 c5. There is some truth to that statement: the classical openings give you the best chance to neutralize the advantage of the first move.

2.♘f3 ♘c6
You have to blame Anton Kovalyov for this choice.... at least indirectly. I'd decided to have a close look at this system one week before the Olympiad when I saw one of his White games in Abu Dhabi where he was lost against a weaker opponent after only 20 moves.

3.♘c3 g6
Before playing ...g6, I noticed that on board 2 Kovalyov vs Nakamura had the following position: 3...♘f6 4.g3 d5 5.d4 e6 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♗g2 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♘xd4 10.♕xd4 ♕xd4 11.cxd4 ♗d6 Kovalyov,A−Nakamura,H Baku, 2016 (½-½, 38).

I thought about playing this line too, which is the preferred way to defend the black side of this variation by the likes of Caruana.
It would have been funny to see the exact same position on board 2-3 and see who would dare to deviate first. :)

4.e3



This is the so−called "refutation" of this system that has been recommended for many years. But things are not so clear, and computers have rehabilitated the whole variation for Black. I've seen commentators on this game say 3... g6 is dubious, but nobody has yet to come out with a refutation to back up their claim.

4...♘f6 5.d4 cxd4

Otherwise White plays d4-d5 with a space advantage.

6.exd4 d5 7.♗g5

The other main line goes: 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♕b3 ♘xc3 9.♗c4 ♘d5 10.♗xd5 e6 11.♗xc6+ bxc6 where Black has the bishop pair and a nice d5 square for his queen. But there is also a real positional danger to end up worse with the weak pawn on c6, and especially if White succeeds in trading the dark−square bishop.

7...♗e6

There is no other decent way to protect the d5 pawn. Incidentally, this opening can also come from a Panov Caro−Kann.

8.♗xf6 exf6

So far we've been following m0y game against Gawain Jones from England from round 3. I did lose very badly in that game, but it wasn't the opening's fault. I was curious to see what kind of preparation Wesley had in store for me. I hadn't found anything clearly promising for White, so I wasn't that worried.

9.h3?!

Jones prefered: 9.c5 ♗g7 10.♗b5 0-0 11.h3 with a balanced position. Honestly, I don't understand So's preparation, as Black can obtain a comfortable position with the correct sequence of moves.

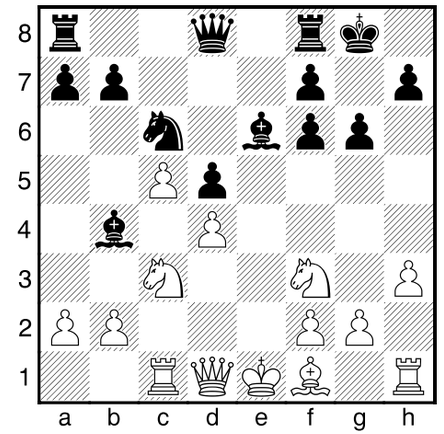
9...♗b4!

Stronger than ...♗g7.

10.c5 0-0?!

I played this obvious move pretty quickly, but Black has a clear way to reach a nice position with: 10...♗xc3+! 11.bxc3 0-0 12.♗d3 b6 13.cxb6 axb6 14.0-0 ♘a5 follow by ...♕c7, ...♖fc8 and ...♘c4; Black's position plays itself.

11.♖c1



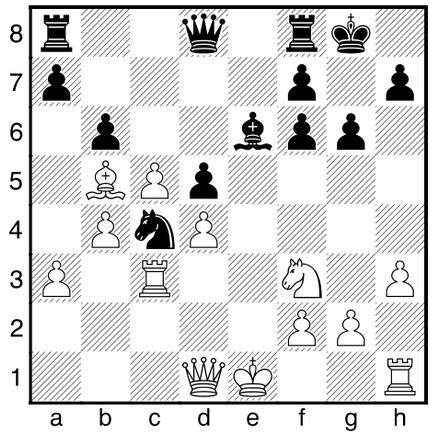
As mentioned by Anton Kovalyov after the game, even though Black was OK, in practice the position is not so simple to play for Black. The situation is strategically unbalanced and the queenside pawn majority of White could prove a factor in the future. Obviously the computer gives many ways for Black to play, but over the board after having missed the strategically simple ...♗xc3+ I was left in an uncomfortable situation.

I thought for a long time here and should probably just have played the obvious ...b6 and just hope for the best. There is no point in trying to work out the complications before they happen. My indecision on obvious moves in this game will result in an uncomfortable and costly *zeitnot* later in the game.

11...b6

I was attracted by: 11...♕e7 12.♗e2 ♖fe8 13.a3 *(13.0-0? ♗xc3 14.♖xc3 ♗xh3!∓)* 13...♗xc3+ 14.♖xc3 ♗f5 but wasn't sure how good it was. I also took some time deciding if I should throw out ...♕e7 or ...♖e8 before playing ...b6. Anyway, like I said, it's pretty pointless spending time on such subtleties, since the complications are too hard to work out for a human.

12.♗b5 ♘a5 13.a3 ♗xc3+ 14.♖xc3 ♘c4 15.b4



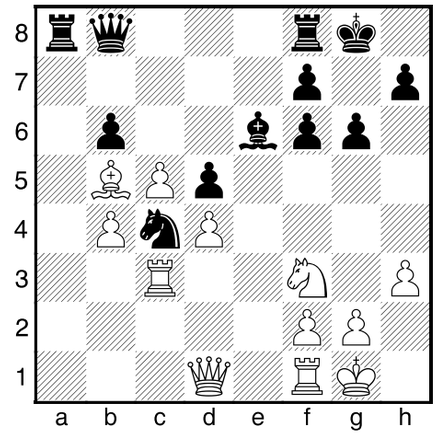
We've reached a position more−or−less forced after ...b6 that is strategically balanced. White has a nice trump with his passed c−pawn, but Black has a superb knight on c4, plus he is slightly ahead in development. I still needed to make something happen quickly because in the long term the c5-pawn will guarantee White a positional advantage.

15...a5?!

Kovalyov was critical of this move after the game: for him it appeared that opening up the queenside made no sense. He was actually right, exchanging a couple of pawns doesn't really help my cause.

It happens that I am still OK, but a simpler solution existed: 15... a6! 16.♗xc4 dxc4 17.0-0 b5 gives Black a comfortable position. The plan is simple: blockade the d−pawn with ...♗d5, then double my rooks on the d−file to exert pressure on the d4 pawn. I saw this obvious line, but and thought it would be fine, but didn't like giving my opponent two connected passed pawns.

16.0-0 axb4 17.axb4 ♕b8?!



Esthetically this move looks wrong, but it also introduces some concreted tactical threats against the bishop on c4, and I couldn't see a refutation so I went for it. As it turned out, like in most cases, the intuitive and harmonious move ...♖b8 was best.

18.♗xc4!

After a prolonged thought So finds the right solution. It appears at first sight that Black gets a lot of pressure on the white pawn center, but the displacement of my queen to b8 has created a nice tactical opportunity on the f6-pawn.

18...dxc4 19.♘d2

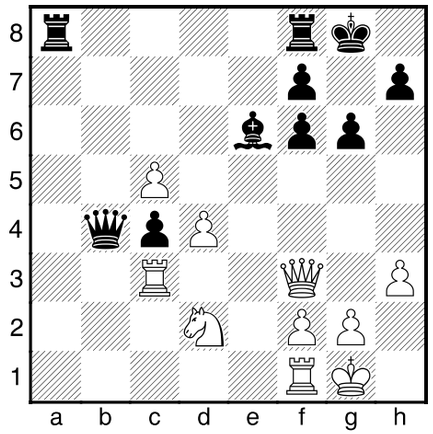
The logical follow up: the knight is ready to jump to e4 at the first opportunity.

19...bxc5 20.bxc5 ♕b4

20...♖d8 is simply answered by 21.♘xc4 and White keep both of his pawns alive.

Alexandre Le Siège

21.♕f3!



As soon as So played this move I realised I was in trouble. I was counting on the simple ...♗d5 to meet ♕f3, but unfortunately hadn't analysed any further. With the confidence So exuded when playing ♕f3 I immediately saw ♘e4 look deadly once my queen takes on c3.

21...♗d5!
Unwillingly I played this move, realising the alternatives are even worse. A good decision from my part, since the unbalanced nature of the resulting position will give me more chances than simply getting ground down in a simply worse position.

22.♕xd5?!
♕g3 was stronger, but I think most grandmasters would take on d5. It's really hard to see the computer−like defense that Black has on move 26.

22...♕xc3 23.♘e4 ♕d3 24.♘xf6+ ♔h8
24...♔g7 25.♕e5! is deadly.

25.♘d7 ♖fe8

Preventing ♕e5+ and praying that my opponent may miss the treat of ...♕xf1+ followed by ...♖a1 mate!

26.♘e5 ♕f5?
The silicion beasts are quick to point out that ...♕e2! would save Black: 26...♕e2! 27.♘xf7+ ♔g7 28.♘e5 c3 and the c−pawn gives enough counterplay according to the computers. But honestly, it looks incredibly scary to play this way in a game with such an exposed king.

27.♕xc4?
27.♘xf7+! ♔g7 28.♘e5+- and Black can't really hold to his c−pawn because his king is too weak.

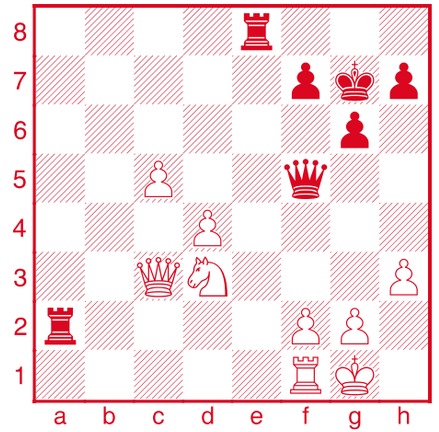
27...♔g7
Now I am back in the game, White is obviously better, but it's not so easy to tell what's the best way to proceed...

28.♕c3?
Here, So began playing very fast — and very badly — trying to exploit my time trouble. This was really not warranted, since he has a clearly better position. Maybe he was feeling the pressure of the occasion and was hoping for a mistake and a quick victory!?

28.♘g4!± followed by ♘e3 is a nice way to reorganize the pieces and stop any counterplay, after which White can start pushing his pawns.

28...♖a2!
Suddenly Black has serious counterplay!

29.♘d3?



A historic position: I now had the chance to help Canada change the fate of the whole Olympiad. This is how the situation looked on the other boards:

1.Bareev was dead lost,
2. Kovalyov was slightly worse, but a draw was the likely result,
3. Hansen was close to winning.

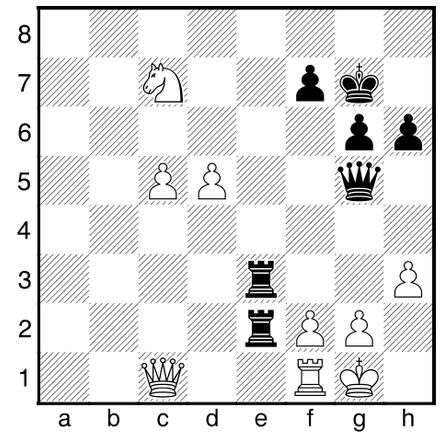
I just needed a draw to stop the Americans from winning the gold medal and propel Canada to 4th place.

I was down to 3 minutes (+30 second increment) to make 12 moves. At the time I didn't realise that the position had changed dramatically from much worse to winning for Black. I guess I was too pessimistic, just one move away and I couldn't reassess correctly the position in time trouble. I unfortunately played a practical, fast move to give me more time for the rest of the game and forgot to calculate lines properly. There was quite an obvious move that simply wins for Black:

29...♕f6?

29...♖ee2! Simple and strong. I would probably play this way even in bullet chess.
The rooks suddenly acquire incredible power by targeting f2 and by stopping the passed pawns *from behind*. The threat is simply ...♖ed2 to kick the knight and then take on f2. White has no choice but to go on a suicidal mission just to stay alive: 30.d5+ f6 31.c6! *(31.d6? ♖ad2-+)* 31...♖ed2 32.c7 ♖ac2! 33.c8♕! ♕xc8 After this forced sequence, Black will eventually win the d−pawn and get an easily winning position. This miss is really heartbreaking, since everything is more or less forced after ...♖ee2 and the extra 30s would have given me ample time to make the time control comfortably.

30.♘b4 ♖ae2 31.♘d5 ♕g5 32.♘c7 ♖8e3 33.♕c1 h6 34.d5



34... ♕e5??

Very low on time I missed a second chance to change the fate of the Olympiad. This mistake is really bad since White has three different ways to win after it.

34...♖d3! was a clear draw. I saw it, but I wasn't completely sure during the game that it was a draw. For example: 35.♕xg5 hxg5 36.♖c1 ♖dd2! and the classic repetition on the second rank saves Black. Every line goes more or less like this. If White tries to prevent the perpetual he risks losing his pawns.

35.fxe3+- ♕g3 36.♕a1+

I saw this move but missed the simple ♕a8+ on ...♔g8. Nevertheless 36.♘e6+ and 36.♖f7+ also win.

Unfortunately, I didn't make use of my chance handed to me on a gold platter by So. I guess it's just the learning curve of adapting to 2700+ opponent and also a reminder... to play faster!

1-0

editor: On **Board 1**, Caruana made short work of Bareev's Caro Kann, achieving a strategically winning game by move 17, and forcing resignation by move 31.

Tense Eleventh

Nakamura scowls Plotkin and Drkulec watch.

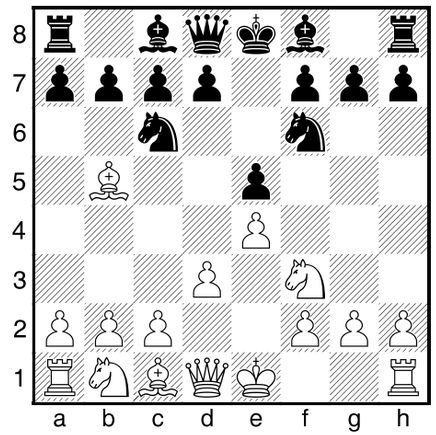
On **board 2**, Kovalyov was making Nakamura uncomfortable, but it wasn't the kind of head-shaking discomfort that might presage an upset, and Naka equalized and the game was drawn in a dead equal Rpp v Rpp ending on move 38... Anton's second draw with Nakamura at an Olympiad.

The remaining game — Hansen -Shankland — could not determine the outcome of the match, but could determine the gold medal winners. Shankland, who had won the gold medal on board 4 at the 2014 Tromso Olympiad, blitzes out a line he had prepared up to move 24 — sacrificing a a pawn which he should be able to recover — but gets outplayed as soon as he gets out of his home prep.

Hansen,Eric (2582)
Shankland,Samuel L (2679)
C65
42nd Olympiad Baku (11.4), 13.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

The numbers in parentheses indicate the time per move, and help convey some of the tension of the final round.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3



An increasingly popular anti−Berlin line. It doesn't give White any advantage, but it keeps more pieces on the board.

4...♗c5 5.c3 0-0

6.0-0 (00:41)
6...d6 (00:03)

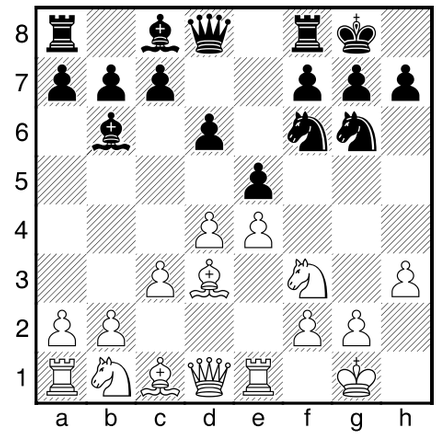
7.h3 (00:26)
7...♘e7 (00:28)

8.d4 (02:07)
8...♗b6 (00:04)

9.♗d3 (00:11)

9...♘g6 (00:08)

10.♖e1 (01:04)



Shankland might well have expected Eric to play this line, as he had done so before:

10...♖e8 (00:10)

10...♘h5 11.♗e3 ♘hf4 12.♗f1 exd4 13.♗xd4 *(13.cxd4!=)* 13...f5!? 14.e5 dxe5 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.♗xe5 ♘g6 17.♗d4 *(17.♘a3±)* 17...c5! 18.♗e3 f4⇄ (0-1, 56) Hansen,E−McShane,L Bundesliga, 2014.

10...c5 was Fressinet,L−Kramnik,V Paris, 2016.

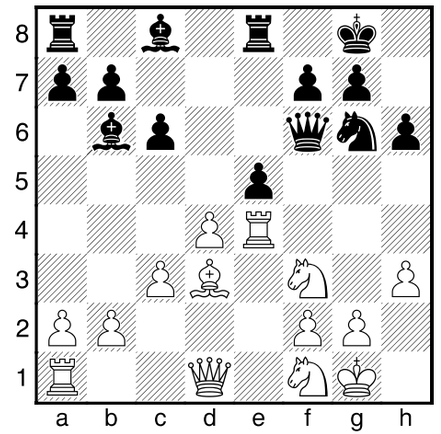
11.♘bd2 (02:22)
11...c6 (00:32)

12.♘f1 (00:58)
12...d5 (00:23

13.♗g5 (01:13)
13...dxe4 (00:05)

14.♖xe4 (00:27)
14...h6 (00:05)

15.♗xf6 (01:21)
15...♕xf6 (00:04)



16.♖e1 (04:37)

16.♖e3 ♗f5 17.♗xf5 ♕xf5 18.♘g3 ♕d7 19.♘xe5 ♘xe5 20.♖xe5 ♖xe5 21.dxe5 ♕e7 22.♕h5 g6 23.♕e2 *(23.♕xh6 ♕xe5=)* 23...♕g5 24.♔f1 ♔f8 25.♖e1 ♖e8= Karjakin,S−So,W Bilbao, 2016.

16...♗f5 (00:05)

17.♗xf5 (00:28)
17...♕xf5 (00:05)

18.♘g3 (00:06)
18...♕f6 (00:04)

19.♘h5 (02:00)
19...♕f5 (00:04)

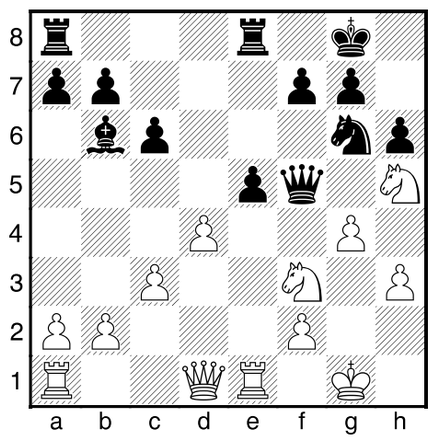
20.♘g3 (26:47)

Eric spent almost 27 minutes on this move, clearly deciding whether or not to force a draw.

20...♕f6 (00:08)

21.♘h5 (00:16)
21...♕f5 (00:06)

22.g4! (01:33)



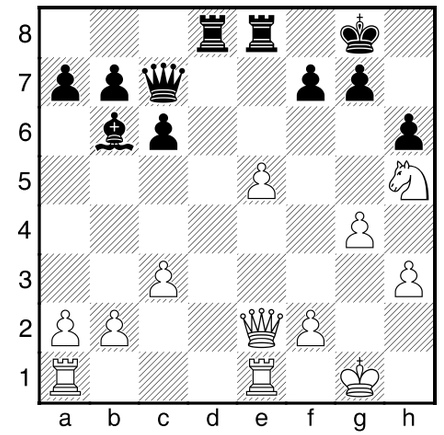
Of course, this is an obvious move, avoiding a repetition and winning a pawn. The problem for White is that the GM playing Black had been moving almost instantaneously so far, and that pretty much guarantees that White would be playing into Black's home preparation. So the question isn't whether Eric thinks the position is better for him or just equal, but whether his position and his nerves are good enough that he can risk playing it against Sam Shankland's computers.

22...♕c8 (00:16)

23.♘xe5 (03:48)
23...♘xe5 (00:05)

24.dxe5 (00:07)
24...♕c7 (00:21)

25.♕e2 (02:24)
25...♖ad8 (08:51)



Black took almost 9 minutes for this move, the first move of the game where he had spent more than half a minute. Black spends nearly an hour on his next four moves, a clear indication that he was now out of his home preparation... and that he wasn't enjoying his position.

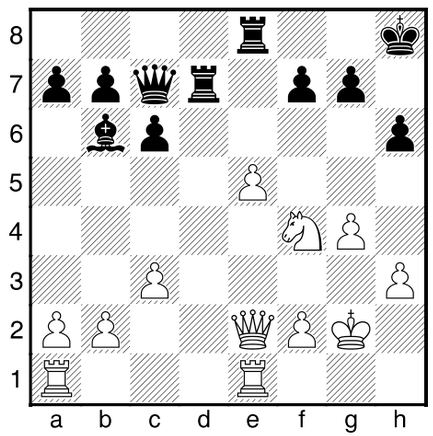
26.♘f4 (05:50)
26...♖d7 (16:17)

16 minutes 17 seconds, and not the computer's top choice.

Stockfish and Houdini both prefer ...♕e7 and rate it equal: Black threatens to continue with ...♗c7 and ...f6.

26...f6? 27.♕c4+±.
26...♕e7 27.a4 ♕c5!?
(27...♗c7=) 28.♘d3 ♕c4 29.a5 *(29.♘b4?? ♕f4-+* threatening ...♕g3+ and ...♖d2.*)* 29...♗c7=.

27.♔g2 (01:24)
27...♔h8 (22:40)



28.♖ac1! (09:37)

A "mysterious rook move"? Not really: it improves the rook and prepares to defend the second rank. Remember: White has an extra pawn; he doesn't have to do anything active, he just has to finish developing, hold onto the pawn, and not fall for any tactics on the dark squares.

28...a6 (06:47)

29.♖c2 (03:19)
29...♕d8 (00:58)

29...♖de7 30.♘d3 White is ready to play f4 with an extra pawn and the initiative, and Black's only try to break up the pawns doesn't work:
30...f6? 31.♘f4! ♔g8 (31...♔h7 32.♕d3+ transposes) 32.♕c4+ ♔h7 33.e6+- Δg5 34.♕e4++-.

30...g5!? stops f4, but after 31.h4! White can attack along the h−file.

30.♕f3 (03:38)
30...♗c7 (01:02)

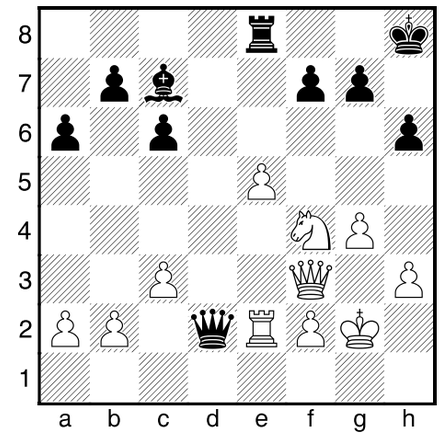
31.♖ce2± (00:07)

White has coordinated his pieces and kept the pawn.

31...♖d2 (05:43)

32.♖xd2 (05:06)
32...♕xd2 (00:01)

33.♖e2 (02:06)



33...♕d7?! (01:01)

33...♕d8± avoids White's next.

34.e6! (03:00)

Changing gears! White has spent the last 15 moves defending this pawn, and a weaker player would get stuck with that as his goal; but as soon as he can trade it for a different advantage Eric takes his chance. A few elementary tactics allow White to establish a ♘ outpost on e6 while retaining his extra pawn.

34...fxe6 (02:53)

35.♘xe6 (01:47)
35...♗d6 (00:18)

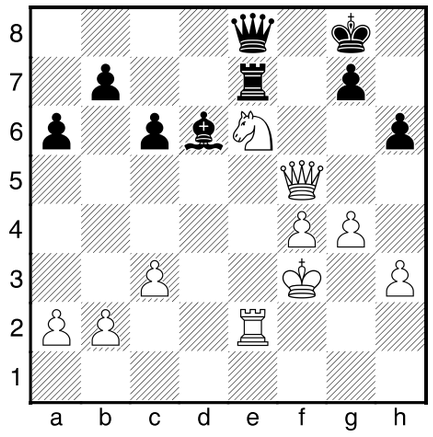
35...♖xe6? 36.♕f8+ ♔h7 37.♕f5++-.

36.♕f5! (01:13)
36...♖e7 (02:43)

37.f4 (04:55)
37...♕e8 (02:06)

Threatening ...♗xf4.

38.♔f3 (03:36)
38...♔g8 (01:18)



39.♕d3 (01:12)
39...♗b8 (01:24)

Again, tactics keep the ♘ alive: 39...♖xe6? 40.♕c4 ♔f7 41.f5+-.

40.f5 (00:00)
Time control and White is in full control.

40...♖d7 (00:00)

41.♕e4 (17:24)

17:24 for this... possibly most of it spent trying to relax, or on a bathroom break after making the time control, or just enjoying the moment: winning on the top board in the final round at the Olympiad.

41...♕e7?! (03:22)

42.♘c5! (00:34)
White wins another pawn and Black resigns.

1-0

4th 6th 11th

While a loss is always unpleasant, I, as a captain, was fairly proud of our team. We gave a really good fight to the winner of the tournament and were very close to changing chess history: an extra ½ point in this match would have made Ukraine the winner, USA would have been 2nd, and Canada 4th overall.

As expected, the loss moved us out of the top-10 in the final standings: 11th place. It was a very good result, one of the best in history for Team Canada. We got 4th place by the number of individual points, after Russia, USA and Ukraine. Our Buchholtz, which shows the quality of our opponents, was the 6th highest in the Olympiad, after India, USA, Ukraine, Russia and Azerbaijan.

Anton won a silver medal for individual performance on 2nd board. His performance rating of 2852 was the second-highest, after Vladimir Kramnik's tremen-

dous 2903. Anton's performance was also the 6th highest among all players, and higher than the performance of both the World Champion Magnus Carlsen (2805) and the title contender Sergey Karjakin (2782). Eric got 6th place on 4th board with a performance of 2738.

Just for comparison, the top 2 Canadian performances in previous Olympiads were made by Kevin Spraggett in 2000 with a performance rating of (2682) and by Anton Kovalyov in 2014 (2670).

Team Review

Evgeny Bareev

Evgeny was the only player on our team who lost a few rating points at the Olympiad. He was disappointed with his performance, but for me it was a decent result. He played mostly with the Black pieces (6 out of 10 times), against stronger, younger, and more active opponents.

Despite being isolated from the team (as he didn't eat, nor hang out with the team often) he always got huge respect from other team members. His funny stories helped create a positive atmosphere at team meetings. His phrase at the end of team meetings — "Let's enjoy life" — became a motto for our team.

With his very healthy lifestyle, I am positive that he will hold his high rating much longer than most of the top players around his age.

Anton Kovalyov

Two years ago I wrote about Anton after the Tromso Olympiad: "I believe, he would have been at least top-30 player in the world had he immigrated from Argentina to a more chess-friendly country". I think his performance at this Olympiad proves it.

Over the past two Olympiads, Anton has lost only one game out of 21 – and that includes games against 2700+ GMs Adams, Gelfand, and Nakamura (twice). He plays extremely strongly in weaker positions. I remember his great save against Boris Gelfand two years ago. Twice in Baku he was very close to losing (against England and Belarus), but at the end he scored 1.5 points in those 2 games.

Probably, the opening is not the strongest part of his game, but in Baku, he consistently outplayed his opponents in equal or even slightly worse positions.

Alex Le Siège

Alex's good performance was very important for our team. He fully accepted his role as a "Black" player and was a very good teammate. He was the only occupant of the double-room in our hotel in Baku, but he spent most of the time preparing with Anton and Tomas in their room.

Five times he got Black against a higher-rated opponent and he won twice. His win in round 5 against Cuba proved that we can compete with very good teams. His victory in round 10 against Latvia was, in my opinion, the most valuable for our team in Baku. Unfortunately, consistently getting in time trouble did not allow him to score more points in our matches with Vietnam or USA.

Eric Hansen

I got a fast answer to the question of whether Eric would be hungry, like in 2012, or not-so-hungry, like in 2014. This time he proved to be determined from the very beginning. The strategy of giving him mostly the White pieces not only helped him to perform well, but also put some pressure on him. Eric was ready for the pressure. In many matches against stronger teams, Eric's board was the only one on which we had an initial advantage thanks to the White colour and the rating. Some teams, like Latvia and USA, had their 4th board much weaker than the top 3 boards. This created an imbalance in those matches and actually gave us more chances against higher-ranked teams.

There was an extremely strong correlation between our team performance in matches and Eric's individual result in his game. In 9 rounds the result was the same. Only twice, against England and USA, was the final

score different.

Being a very social and ambitious player, Eric really enjoyed our great performance. I hope this tournament, and the fact that he finally crossed 2600 level, will help him to make additional improvements in his game. He is definitely capable of doing so.

Tomas Krnan

I feel really bad that Tomas played only five games in Azerbaijan, and three of them were against very low-rated opponents. Our strong performance and very tough opponents forced me to rely more on our higher-rated line-up. His solid draw against Belarus, and a great win against Denmark were critical for our team.

I have known Tomas for more than 10 years, we played some games, but before the Olympiad I never got a real opportunity to talk much with him. He really is a nice person and a good teammate.

The success of many teams in team's competition, like ice-hockey, basketball or chess, depends highly on role players. In our case, Alex and Tomas contributed a lot to our team success. Our strategy of giving Eric White against opponents' middle boards could not have worked without their great performance with the Black pieces.

a little about the others

The Canadian Women's Team, after a very successful previous Olympiad, finished close to its initial ranking position. Only Yuanling Yuan showed a strong performance with 8.5 points in 10 games. She played well two years ago in Norway as well.

This was the first time in modern history that **USA won** a chess Olympiad. I do not count the 1976 Olympiad, where the USA finished 1st because strong teams from communist countries, like USSR and Hungary, did not show up. USA successfully acquired two more top-10 players, Caruana and So. Now, with three very strong and young players — Caruana, So, Nakamura — they have greater chances to win future Olympiads than any other team, including Russia. Actually, Russia still has higher average rating for top-10, top-8, or even top-5 players... but with just 4 boards, the USA should be the favourite.

Usually, 19 or even 18 points is enough to win the Olympiad. But this year, **Ukraine** scored 10 wins and only 1 loss (to USA) to finish with 20 team points, but finished only second overall. Their tie break was very close to USA's due to a big 3.5-0.5 win in the last round against Slovenia. At one moment, after Eljanov beat Beliavsky on board 1, they were sure that their team would be the gold medalists. At the end, Ukraine did not win the Olympiad because of the match Germany-Estonia on team board 28 (*editor* - see "Around the Hall").

Ukraine's reserve player, **Andrei Volokitin**, had the best performance on any board at the Olympiad: 8½ /9 with a 2992 performance. Eric, in round 7, missed a chance to slightly reduce this fantastic number.

Russia performed much better than in the previous Olympiad, and they even gained 10 rating points combined. However, it was not enough, and Russia has yet to become champions since the retirement of Gary Kasparov. It will be more difficult for them to win future Olympiads, because they probably will lose the status of rating favourites to the USA.

China could not repeat their success from 2014. They finished 13th, two positions below our team. It shows how difficult and unpredictable a team competition is.

Netherlands, one of the very strong teams, finished way down in 36th position. They started the tournament with 5 consecutive wins, but earned only 3 team points (one win and one draw) in the last 6 rounds. Definitely, the second half is much more important for the final standing than the first half.

Many teams had significantly **fewer Russian-speaking players** than usual. The winner, USA had no Russian-speakers (compared to three players in Tromso in 2014). Germany had only 1. Israel had just 3 — usually they have all five. Canada had only two, after having 3 in 2014, and 4 in both 2012 and 2010. The whole Canadian delegation, including players and captains, had just 4 members who speak Russian. It was seven in Norway only two years ago, and eight in 2012 in Istanbul.

Predictions

I am fairly happy with the predictions I made two years ago in my article in *Chess Canada*:

> "... we can expect the average rating of the Canadian Team be around 2580-2600 level. This average must be enough for something like 30th starting position and in case of successful tournament, for a top-20 finish".

We had the average rating of 2597 (based on the top-4 players), 25th starting rank, and 11th position in the final standing. So my prediction was really close.

The Canadian Team will likely be very different in 2018 in Batumi, Georgia. The new CFC requirement of 20 games in a year before the Olympiad makes it more difficult for a semi-retired player like Evgeny Bareev to qualify for the next Olympiad team. Unfortunately, I am not sure if Anton will continue his chess career. I really hope he will play for us in future Olympiads. Canadian youngest GM, Razvan Preotu will likely be a valuable addition to the Canadian Team.

About myself, I can say that it is not easy to find additional motivation for another run. One needs a really great imagination to even hope for a better result than we had this year. That leaves me asking myself a crucial question: what do you appreciate more, the final goal or the process? If the goal was to show a great final result, the mission has been accomplished. If the process is more important, then there might be reason to try again.

In closing, I want to thank my son Mark Plotkin for editing this article.

- Victor Plotkin

photos

Chess Canada facebook
https://www.facebook.com/ChessCanada/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1083866601698609

Google page
https://plus.google.com/photos/109802875639835440521/albums/6329649545002102065

Canadian Men's Team Results
http://chess-results.com/tnr232875.aspx?lan=1&art=20&fed=CAN&flag=30&wi=821

thanks

Most of the photos are from official Olympiad photographers who posted them online, including: Paul Truong, Eteri Kublashvili, David Llada.

Some of the photos are from Canadian players, including Yuanling Yuan and Qiyu Zhou.

The washed out ones are screencaps from the online feed.

Special Thanks

Victor Plotkin, for his exceptional report (and results).

The players who annotated their games.

Eric and **Aman** for the Vlog.

Paul Truong (photographer and Susan Polgar's husband) who made an extra effort to get pix of the Canadian players when our on-site folks were not permitted access, and posted them in high resolution online.

Women's Team

by **John Upper**

The Canadian women did not provide the Cinderella story of the men's team, but it would be unfair to judge any team by such an outstanding standard.

The Canadian Women finished =30-42 and 39th on tie-break. They went in ranked 40th, but as a team they played below their rating until the last two rounds, which they won 8-0.

The highlight for the Canadian women, as in Tromso 2014, was **WIM Yuanling Yuan,** who scored +7 =3 -0 which was the best percentage score on board 2!

Yuanling graduated from Yale this year, and just before the Olympiad she started a job in New York City and so had little time to work on chess prior to the Olympiad. The fact that she still played 10 rounds and went undefeated is mind-boggling!

Unfortunately for Yuanling, Olympiad board prizes are now awarded based on tournament performace rating, and so her 85% score did not get a medal because her opponents were not rated high enough.

Qiyu Zhou was the Selection Committee's choice in 2014, and she played board 4 in Norway. Since then, she has been by far the most active woman player in Canada, and raised her FIDE rating to be the #1 woman in Canada, and so played board 1 for the Canadian Women in Baku. Qiyu's Olympiad results were not helped by the fact that her luggage was lost by the airline, and she didn't get it until a week into the event. Even so, her result in Baku was disappointing: +3 = 3 -4, and a big loss of rating points.

Creditable performances were turned in by both Lali Agbabishvili (+4 =3 -2) on board 4, and Maili-Jade Ouellet (+5 =0 -2 on board 5) playing in her first Olympiad as the Selection Committee's choice.

Closing Ceremony Team Selfie

Yuanling Yuan, Alexandra Botez, Qiyu Zhou, Maili-Jade Ouellet, Lali Agbabishvili.

Board 2: Best Score by %

Rk.	Name	Team	%	Rtg	Rp	Pts.	Games
1	**WIM Yuan Yuanling**	**Canada**	**85**	**2205**	**2355**	**8.5**	**10**
2	GM Gunina Valentina	Russia	80	2520	2643	8.0	10
3	IM Daulyte Deimante	Lithuania	80	2421	2481	8.0	10
4	IM Vega Gutierrez Sabrina	Spain	77	2411	2420	8.5	11
5	Kannappan Sigappi	Hong Kong	77	1864	2027	8.5	11

Alexandra Botez did not fare much better than Qiyu, scoring +2 =3 -4 on board 3 and losing a lot of rating points.

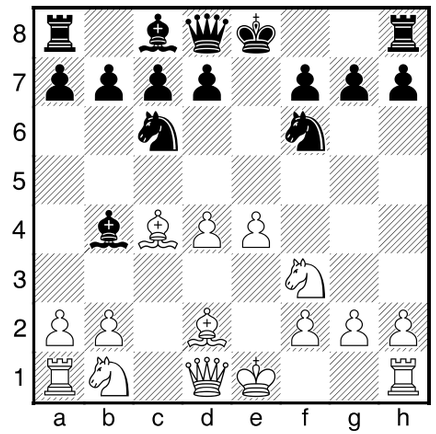
The event started with some unnecessary excitement for the women as their captain, IM Aman Hambleton, got to the airport too late to board his plane, and did not arrive in Baku until the next day. This had no material effect on the first round games, where Canada had a huge rating advantage on every board.

Their round 1 result does, however, entitle CFC President Vlad Drkulec, who substituted as Captain for the first round, to lay claim to title of Most Successful Captain in Canadian Olympiad history: 1-0 match record with a perfect 4-0 score!

Notes by FM Qiyu Zhou

Joshi, Sindira (1574)
Zhou, Qiyu (2367)
C54
Women's Olympiad Baku (1.39), 02.09.2016

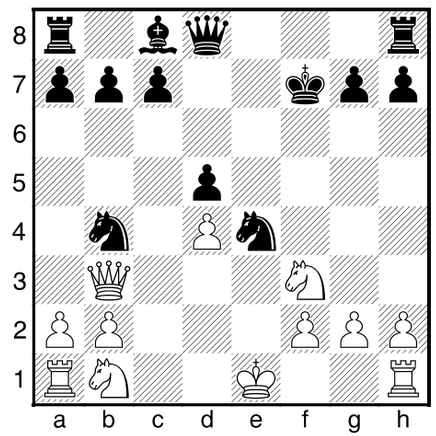
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♗c4 ♗c5 5.c3 ♘f6 6.cxd4 ♗b4+ 7.♗d2



7...♘xe4

editor − 7...♗xd2+ is playable, but doesn't give Black much chance to fight for a win: 8.♘bxd2 d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♕b3 ♘a5 is a very common GM draw: 11.♕a4+ ♘c6 12.♕b3 ♘a5 13.♕a4+ ♘c6 ½-½ Short,N − Korneev,O Bunratty, 2016.

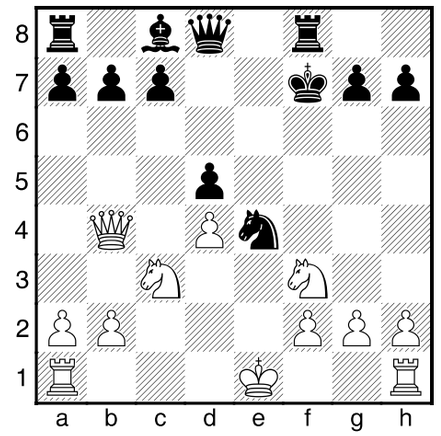
8.♗xb4 ♘xb4 9.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 10.♕b3+ d5



11.♕xb4

editor − a position with a very long and lively history:
11.♘e5+:
11...♔g8 12.♕xb4 ♕f6 13.0-0 c5 14.♕b5 b6? 15.♕e8+ ♕f8 16.♕c6 ♗a6 17.♕xd5+ ♕f7 18.♕xf7# 1-0 Greco,G−NN 1620.
11... ***♔e6*** 12.♕xb4 ♕f8 13.♕xf8 ♖xf8 14.f3 ♘g5 15.♘c3 c6 16.h4 ♘f7 17.♘d3 ♔d6 18.♔f2 ♘d8 19.g3 ♘e6 20.♘e2= (½-½, 55) Hou,Y−Aronian,L Wijk aan Zee, 2015.

11...♖f8 12.♘c3



12...♘xc3?

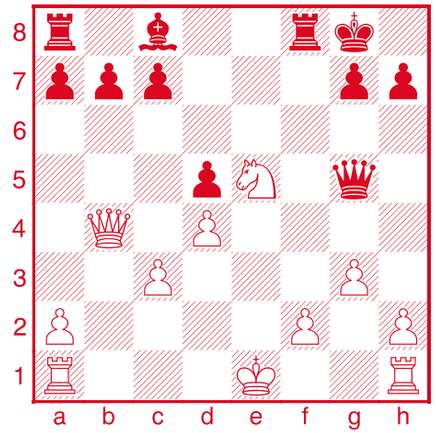
Much better was 12...♔g8 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♘e5 ♕d5∞.

13.bxc3?!
editor − Natural, but the wrong recapture. After ♕xc3! the ♕ defends the third rank with protects against kingside attacks with ...♖xf3 or ...♕g5 and ...♗h3. 13.♘e5+ ♔g8 14.♕xc3!± Now Black would have an extremely tough time playing this position, with White's knight dominating on e5.

13...♔g8 14.♘e5
At first I was a bit confused as to why White played this after a long think instead of 0-0, but then I realized White can't castle because of ...♖xf3 and upcoming mate: 14.0-0?? ♖xf3 15.gxf3 ♗h3 16.♔h1 ♕f6-+.

14...♕g5
White's king is looking extremely weak.

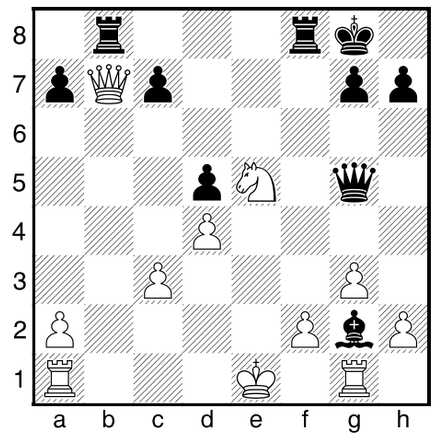
15.g3?
15.0-0□ ♗h3 16.g3□∓.



15...♖xf2!
I spent a bit more than 20 minutes on this move.

The other move I looked at was 15...♗h3 16.♕xb7 *(16.f4 ♕h5 17.♕xb7 ♗g2-+; 16.♕b2 ♕h6 17.♖g1 ♖ae8* and it becomes very tough for White to play.*)* 16...♗g2 17.♖g1 ♖ab8

Analysis Diagram



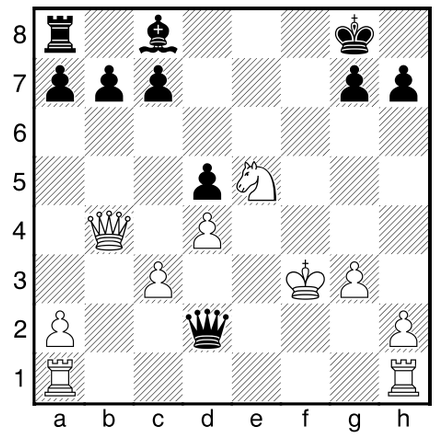
18.♕xa7 ♖b2-+;

18.f4 ♕f5 19.♕a6 ♖b2 20.♕d3 ♕h3 21.0-0-0 ♗e4-+; 18.♕xc7 ♖b2 19.f4 ♕f5-+ with mate in a few moves;

18.♕c6:
18...♕f5 19.♖xg2 ♕e4+ 20.♔f1 ♖xf2+ 21.♔xf2 ♖b2+ 22.♔f1 ♕xg2+ 23.♔e1 ♕e2#;

18...♖xf2 also works *19.♕e6+ ♔h8 20.♘f7+ ♖xf7 21.♕xf7 ♕e3+-+; 18...♖b2??* doesn't work now *19.♕e6+ ♔h8 20.♘f7+ ♔g8 21.♘h6+ ♔h8 22.♕g8+ ♖xg8 23.♘f7#.*

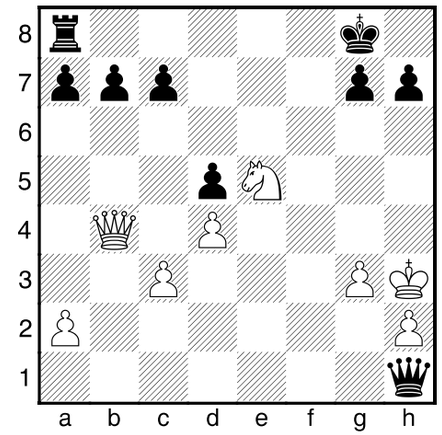
16.♔xf2 ♕d2+ 17.♔f3



17...♗h3
17...♗f5 looked extremely strong too 18.♖ad1 *(18.♖hf1 ♖f8 19.g4 ♗e4+ #3.)* 18...♗e4+ 19.♔g4 ♕e2+ 20.♔h4 h6-+.

18.♖ad1
18.♖hd1 ♗g2+ 19.♔g4 ♕e2+ 20.♔h4 ♕e4+ 21.♘g4 ♔h8 White gets mated: 22.♕b1 ♕e7+ 23.♔h5 ♕f7+ 24.♔h4 g5+ #4.

18...♗g2+ 19.♔g4 ♕e2+ 20.♔h4 ♗xh1 21.♖xh1 ♕e4+ 22.♔h3 ♕xh1

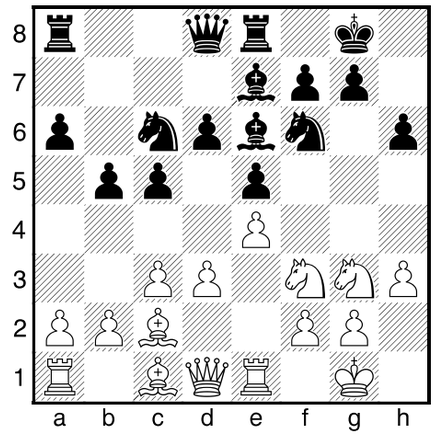


23.♕e7
23.♕xb7 ♖f8 24.♕xc7 ♕f1+ 25.♔h4 ♕f6+ 26.♔h3 ♕f5+ 27.♔g2 (27.g4 ♕f1+-+) 27...♕f1#.

23...♕f1+ 24.♔h4 ♕f6+

25.♕xf6 gxf6 26.♘d7 ♔f7 27.♘c5 b6 28.♘d3 ♖e8 29.♘f4 c6 30.♔g4 ♖e3 31.♔f5 ♖xc3 32.♘h5 ♖c2 33.h4 ♖xa2 34.♔f4 a5 35.♔e3 b5 36.♘f4 a4 37.♘d3 a3 38.♘b4 ♖b2

0-1



Notes by FM Qiyu Zhou

Vazquez Maccarini, Danitza (2142)
Zhou, Qiyu (2367)
C90
Women's Olympiad Baku (3.1), 04.09.2016

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.d3 b5 6.♗b3 ♗e7 7.0-0 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.♖e1 ♘c6 12.♘bd2 ♖e8 13.♘f1 h6 14.♘g3 ♗e6

15.a4
15.0-0□ ♗h3 16.g3□∓.

15.d4 cxd4 16.cxd4 exd4 17.♘xd4 *(17.♘e2 ♘b4 18.♗b1 d3 19.♘ed4 ♗f8 20.a3 ♘c2 21.♘xc2 dxc2 22.♗xc2 ♗c8 23.♘d4 ♗b7 24.♘f5 ♖c8 25.♘g3 d5 26.e5 ♘e4∓* (0-1, 38) Svidler,P−Leko,P Monte Carlo (rapid), 2007.*)* 17...♘xd4 18.♕xd4 ♖c8 19.♗b3 d5 *(19...♗xb3 20.axb3 d5=* (1/2-1/2, 34) Leko,P−Aronian,L Morelia/Linares, 2008.*)* 20.e5 ♘d7 21.♕d1 ♘b6∓ *(21...♘c5 22.♗e3=* (½-½, 37) Lutz,C−Kramnik,V Brissago, 2004.*)* 15.♗b3 c4 16.♗c2 cxd3 17.♗xd3 ♗f8 18.a4 b4 19.c4 ♘d7=.

15...♖c8
I had played a game in this line last year at the World Youth, which went: 15...♗f8 16.♘h2 d5 17.exd5 ♗xd5 18.♘g4 ♘xg4 19.♕xg4 ♗e6 20.♕e4 ♗d5 21.♕g4 g6?! *(⌓21...♗e6=)* 0-1 Buiza Prieto,E (2057)−Zhou,Q (2328) Porto Carras WYCC, 2015.

16.♘h2
16.axb5 axb5 17.♘h2 ♕d7 18.♘h5 ♖a8 19.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 20.♗e3 ♖xa1 21.♕xa1 0-1 Baumegger,S (2413)−Sokolov,I (2663) Izmir, 2004. 21...♕b7∓.

16...d5
I got ...d5 in pretty comfortably, and I would say I even had a slight plus here.

17.exd5 ♕xd5 18.♘e4 b4 19.♕f3 ♕d8 20.♗e3

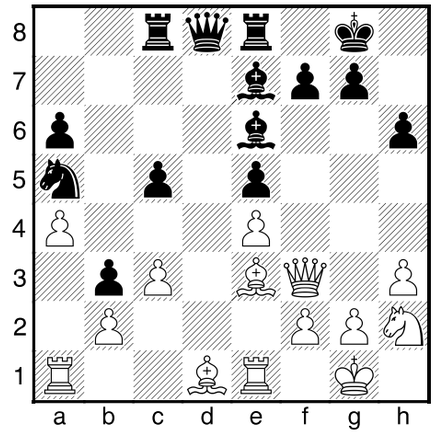
This was a critical moment.

20...b3?!
For some reason I thought this was a great move.

20...♘d7∓ is more typical for Spanish positions. Black's knight protects both c5 and adds support for e5, while threatening ...f5, after which the knight can return to f6. Black has more space, and therefore I shouldn't want to trade pieces. 21.♗d2 just to step out of any ...♘d4 tactics. Also, it's not that easy for White to make a move. *(21.g4 ♘d4!)* 21...f5 (21...b3 22.♗d1 *(22.♗b1 f5)* 22...c4 23.dxc4 f5 24.♘g3 e4∓) 22.♘g3 ♖f8∓.

But even better is the untypical ***20...♘d4!∓*** which I did not see: 21.cxd4 *(21.♗xd4 exd4∓)* 21...cxd4 22.♗xh6 ♖xc2 23.♕g3 ♗f8 24.♘xf6+ *(24.♗c1 ♘xe4)* 24...♕xf6 25.♗g5 ♕g6 26.♗c1 *(26.♖xe5 f6-+)* 26...♕xg3 27.fxg3 ♗d5 White's pawn structure is in shambles.

21.♗d1= ♘xe4 22.dxe4 ♘a5?!



My plan was to get a knight onto c4, where White would be practically forced to exchange the it for her bishop. I went for this plan because I thought the pair bishops would be useful in this position... however this was not the case as my light−squared bishop was a liability on c4.

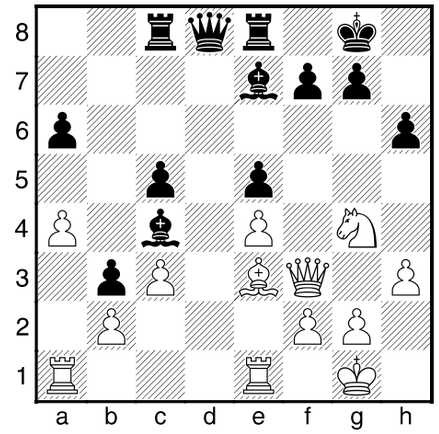
23.♗e2 ♘c4?!
23...c4 24.♘g4 ♘c6 25.♖ed1 ♕c7 26.♕g3 ♔h7 27.a5 Black's position is extremely uncomfortable.

24.♗xc4 ♗xc4 25.♘g4→

Rd.3 vs Puerto Rico

Zhou, Yuan, Botez, Ouellet

standing at back, the "late" Aman Hambleton



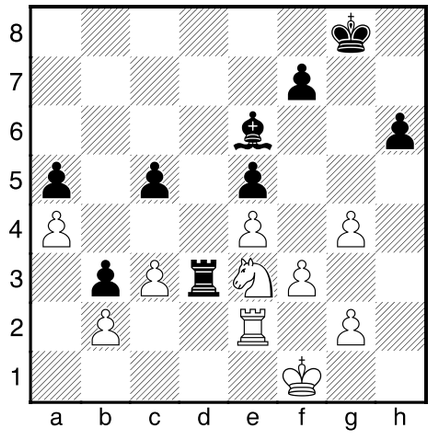
Black's kingside is just too weak without a knight on f6, and three of White's pieces are already aimed there.

25...♗d6?!
25...♗f8 26.♕g3 h5 27.♘xe5 h4 28.♕h2 *(28.♕f4 ♗d6∓)* 28...♗d6 29.f4 ♗xe5 30.fxe5 ♕c7.

26.♖ad1 ♖e6?
Honestly, I think at this point everything is kind of bad, whether or not I see the tactics: 26...h5 27.♘f6+ ♕xf6 *(27...gxf6? 28.♗h6 ♔h7 29.♕xh5 ♖h8 30.♖e3+-)* 28.♕xf6 gxf6 29.♖xd6±.

27.♗xh6!± gxh6 28.♘e3 ♖f6 29.♕g4+ ♖g6 30.♖xd6! ♖xg4 31.♖xd8+ ♖xd8

32.hxg4 ♗e6 33.♔f1 a5 34.f3 ♖d2 35.♖e2 ♖d3



36.♘d5?
She was happy with the draw.

She had a win with ***36.♔e1:***

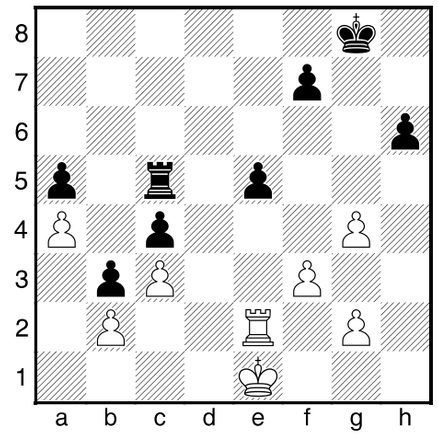
a) 36...♔f8 37.♖d2+- leads to the same as ...f6 and ...♔g7.

b) 36...f6 37.♖d2 ♖xd2 *(37...♖xe3+ 38.♔f2+-)* 38.♔xd2 c4 39.♘f5 ♔h7 40.♘d6 Black's light−squared bishop is useless against White's knight, which is about to win the a5-pawn.

c) 36...♔g7 37.♖d2 ♖xe3+ 38.♔f2 ♖xc3 39.bxc3 ♗c4 40.♖d6 f6 41.♖b6+- White's king goes to c1 leaving white's rook free to take all of Black's pawns.

d) If I try 36...♖d7 37.♘f5 ♗xf5 38.exf5 f6 39.♖d2 ♖c7 *(39...♖xd2 40.♔xd2+-* and White's ♔ will get to the queenside pawns through c4 or d5.*)* 40.♖d6 ♔f7 41.♖a6+-.

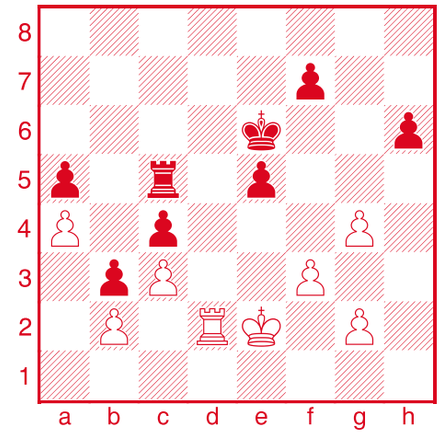
36...♗xd5 37.exd5 ♖xd5 38.♔e1 c4 39.♖e4 ♖c5 40.♖e2



40...♔f8?
I'm not sure what I was thinking.

40...♖d5 41.♖d2 ♖xd2 42.♔xd2 ♔f8 *(42...f6?* for some reason I was convinced I had to play ...f6 to make sure my king got to the center in time, but it would result in me getting *zugzwanged* after *43.♔e3 ♔f7 44.♔e4 ♔e6 45.f4□+-)* 43.♔e3 ♔e7 44.♔e4 ♔e6= this could have appearing in the game, if we had played on.

41.♖d2 ♔e7 42.♔e2 ♔e6



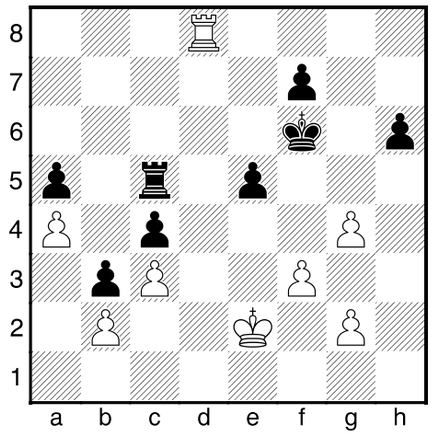
43.♔e3?
43.♖d8 was necessary, which White should be winning.

a) 43...f5 44.gxf5+ *(44.♖h8 fxg4 45.♖xh6+ ♔f5 46.♖h5+ ♔f6 47.fxg4 ♖c7* could be unclear. White is most likely still better, but it would be more difficult to score the full point.*)* 44...♔xf5 45.♔e3 h5 46.♖h8 ♔g5 47.♔e4 ♔g6 48.♖e8 ♔f6 49.g3+- and Black gets in zugzwang.

b) 43...♔e7 44.♖h8 ♖c6 *(44...f6 45.♖h7+ ♔e6 46.♖xh6+-* pawn down... this should be impossible to hold.*)* 45.♔e3 *(45.♖a8 ♖c5 46.♖a7+ ♔f6 (46...♔f8 47.♖a6 ♔g7 48.♖d6) 47.♖b7 ♔e6 (If anything else, eg. 47...♔g6 48.♖b5+-) 48.♖b6+ ♔e7 49.♖xh6+-)* 45...♖d6! going for ♖d1, in order to capture some of White's pawns. *(45...♖e6 46.♔e4 ♔d6 47.♖a8+-* I just have too many weaknesses.*)* 46.♔e2 is necessary, which just transposes to ♖a8 straightaway. *(46.♖c8 ♖d1 47.♖xc4 ♖e1+ 48.♔d2 ♖b1 49.♖c5 ♖xb2+ 50.♔d3 ♔d6 51.♖xa5 ♖xg2=)* 46...♖c6 *(46...♔d7 47.♖a8 ♖d5 48.♖a7+ ♔e6 49.♖a6+ ♖d6 50.♖xa5+-)* 47.♖a8 ♖c5 48.♖a7+ ♔f8 *(48...♔f6 49.♖b7* transposes.*)* 49.♖b7 f6 *(49...♔g7 50.♖b5+-)* 50.♖h7 ♔g8 51.♖xh6+-;

c) 43...♔f6 is the natural move, but White has a choice of ways to win:

Analysis Diagram



White has a choice of ways to win.

a) 44.♔e3 ♔e7 45.♖h8 ♖d5 As long as White doesn't let Black get any counterplay, she should be winning. 46.♖xh6?= *(46.♔e2 ♖d6 47.♖c8+-)* 46...♖d1□⇄ 47.♖a6 *(47.♔e4 ♖d2 48.♔xe5 ♖xb2=)* 47...♖e1+ 48.♔d2 ♖b1 49.♖xa5 ♖xb2+ 50.♔e3 ♔d6 51.♖a6+ ♔c7 52.♖a5□ *(52.♖f6?? ♖c2 53.♖xf7+ ♔b6-+)* 52...♖b1 53.♖b5□ *(53.♖xe5?? ♖e1+-+)* 53...♖e1+ 54.♔d2 ♖g1 55.♔e3 ♖xg2 56.♖b4 b2 57.a5 ♔d6 58.a6 ♖c2 59.♔e4 *(59.a7? ♖xc3+ 60.♔e2 ♖a3 61.♖xb2∓)* 59...f5+ 60.♔xf5 *(60.gxf5?? ♖e2#)* 60...♖xc3 61.♖xb2 *(61.a7 ♖xf3+ 62.♔g5 ♖a3∓)* 61...♖xf3+ 62.♔e4=.

b) 44.♖b8 the idea is to play ♖b6, followed by ♖b5 if Black plays ...♔g7 to protect the h6 pawn. 44...e4!?⇄ *(44...♔e7 45.♖b7+ ♔e8 46.♖b6+-)* 45.fxe4 ♖g5 46.♔f3 h5 47.♖c8 *(47.gxh5 ♖xh5 48.♖c8 ♖h1 49.♖xc4 ♖b1 50.♖c5 ♖xb2 51.♖xa5 ♖c2 52.♖b5 ♖xc3+ 53.♔f4 ♖c4 54.a5 ♖a4 55.g4 b2 56.♖xb2 ♖xa5=)* 47...hxg4+ 48.♔f4 ♖h5 49.♖xc4 ♖h2 50.♖c6+ *(50.♔g3 ♖h1)* 50...♔e7 51.♖b6 ♖xg2 52.♖xb3 g3 53.♔f3+-.

c) 44.♖d6+ ♔g5 45.♔e3 f6 46.♔e4 h5 *(46...♔g6 47.♖d5+-)* 47.♖d8 *(47.gxh5 f5+ 48.♔e3 ♔xh5 49.f4! e4 50.g3 ♔g4 51.♖g6+ ♔h3 52.♔f2+-)* 47... hxg4 48.♖g8+ ♔h6 49.♖xg4 ♔h7 50.♔f5 ♖c6+-;

43...♖d5

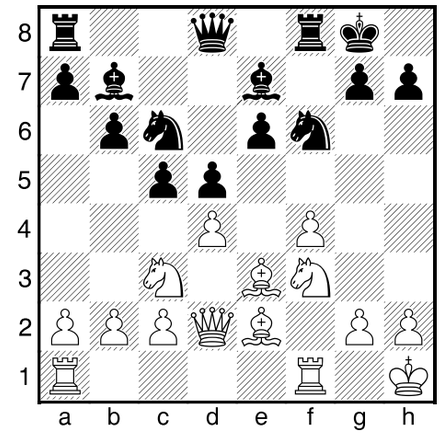
Later, one of my friends told me that my opponent was quite unhappy with the end result, as by then she had realized she was winning. Luckily for me, she didn't see 43.♖d8 during the game.

½-½

Yuan, Yuanling (2205)
Morales Santos, Natasha (1908)

C11
Women's Olympiad Baku (3.2), 04.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 ♗e7 8.♕d2 0-0 9.♗e2 b6 10.0-0 f5 11.exf6 ♘xf6 12.♔h1 ♗b7



13.♗d3

13.♖ad1 ♖c8 14.♗b5 ♗d6 15.g3 ♘a5 16.♗e2 a6 17.♘e5 ♕c7 18.♔g1 ♖fd8 19.♕e1 b5 20.♗f3 cxd4 21.♗xd4 ♗c5= (0-1, 44) Hjartarson,J−Short,N Nuuk, 2016.

13.♖ae1 ♔h8 14.♗b5 a6 15.♗xc6 ♗xc6 16.♘g5 ♕d7 17.a3 *(17.♗g1 ♘e4 18.♘gxe4 dxe4 19.♘xe4 cxd4 20.♕xd4 ♕b7⩱)* 17...♖ad8 18.♖d1 ♗d6 19.♕e2 ♖de8 20.♖de1 ♕c7 21.♕f2 h6 22.♕h4 ♔g8 23.♘f3 ♗b7 ½-½ Caruana,F−Kazhgaleyev,M Khanty−Mansiysk, 2010.

13...♘b4

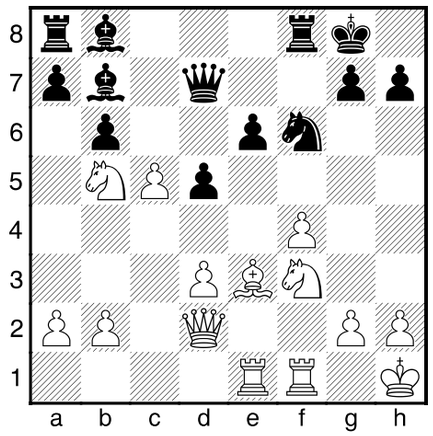
13...c4 keeps the center closed and Black is OK. 14.♗e2 ♗b4!?

13...a6 14.a3?! "A loss of time. During the game, it seemed to me important to prevent the possibility of a black piece jumping to b4, for example after c4 ♗e2; ♗b4, but now White does not manage to create pessure on the e6-pawn, which is more important." − T.Kosintseva, in ChessBase; game cited in Watson's *Play the French* (4th ed.). *(14.♖ae1!?)* 14...♕c7 15.♕e1 c4∞ (1-0, 39) Kosintseva,T−Rajlich,I Novi Sad, 2009.

14.♖ae1 ♘xd3 15.cxd3 ♗d6 16.♘b5 ♗b8

16...c4! 17.dxc4 dxc4∞.

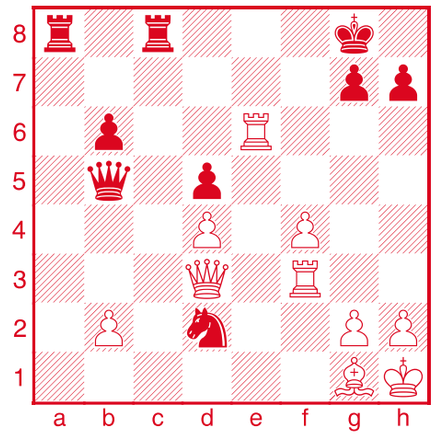
17.dxc5 ♕d7



18.♘c3

18.c6! turns d4 into an outpost after 18...♗xc6 19.♘bd4.

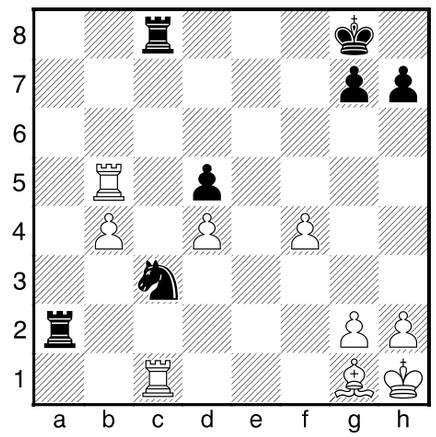
18...♘h5 19.cxb6 axb6 20.♘d4 ♗d6 21.♘db5 ♗c5 22.d4 ♗b4 23.a3 ♗a6 24.axb4 ♗xb5 25.♖f3 ♘f6 26.♗g1 ♗c6 27.b5 ♗xb5 28.♘xb5 ♕xb5 29.♖xe6 ♘e4= 30.♕c2 ♖fc8 31.♕b1 ♘d2 32.♕d3



32...♕xd3?

32...♕d7! leaves both ♖s attacked and White has to give up an exchange: 33.♖fe3 ♘e4 34.♖6xe4∓ *(not 34.♖xb6? ♖a1-+* threatening ...♘f2+ and ...♖xg1.*)*

33.♖xd3 ♘e4 34.♖d1± b5 35.♖b6 ♖a5?! (⌓35...♖cb8.) **36.b4 ♖a2 37.♖xb5 ♘c3 38.♖c1**



38...♘xb5?

38...♖c4 gives Black much better chances to hold.

39.♖xc8+ ♔f7 40.♖c5+- ♘d6 41.♖xd5 ♔e6 42.♖e5+ ♔f6 43.d5 ♘c4 44.♖e4 ♘a3 45.g4 ♘b5 46.♖e6+ ♔f7 47.♖b6 ♘c3 48.♖b7+ ♔e8 49.d6 ♖d2 50.♖e7+ ♔f8 51.♗c5 ♘a4 52.♖a7 ♘xc5 53.bxc5 ♔e8 54.♖xg7 ♖c2 55.♖c7 ♖c4 56.c6 ♖xf4 57.♖c8+

1-0

Highest Women's TPR in Canadian Olympiad history.
Chess in the Library started in high-school.
Businesss started while in college.
Degree from Yale.
Job in NYC.

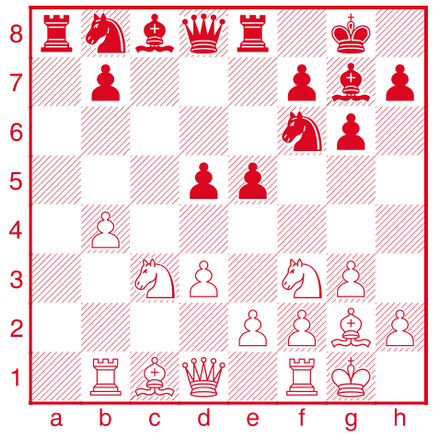
What do I say when I attack the King

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Comas Colon, Rinelly M (1773)
Botez, Alexandra (2092)
A24
Women's Olympiad Baku (3.3), 04.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.c4 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.♘c3 0-0 5.d3 d6 6.♘f3 e5 7.0-0 c6
7...♘c6 is much more popular, but the game line scores just as well for Black.

8.♖b1 a5 9.a3 ♖e8 10.b4 axb4 11.axb4 d5= 12.cxd5 cxd5



After 13.♗g5 ♗e6, should White capture on e5?

13.♘d2
After 13.♗g5 ♗e6 the stem game went: 14.e4 d4 15.♘d5 ♘bd7 16.♘xf6+ ♗xf6∓ 0-1 (35) Vaganian,R−Kasparov,G Riga, 1995.

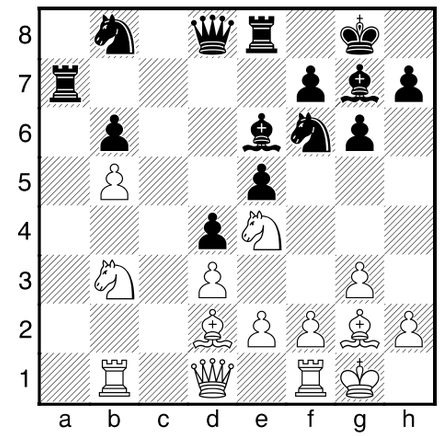
But White can and should take the pawn: 14.♘xe5!N

Ribli gives this a ?? in ChessBase, but chess analysis has come a very long way since 1995, and there are some hard−to−imagine tactics here...

14...♕c7 looks like it just wins a piece, but: 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 *(15...♕xc3 16.♖b3±)* 16.♘xd5!! ♕xe5 *(16...♗xd5 17.♘g4+-)* 17.d4!± and the Black ♕ can't defend both f6 and c7.

13...♗e6 14.♘b3 b6 15.b5 ♖a7 16.♗d2
16.d4!? e4.

16...d4 17.♘e4



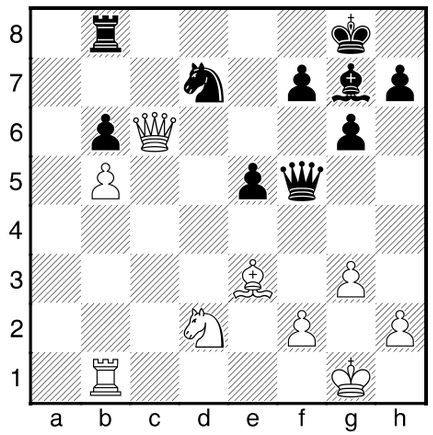
17...♘xe4
17...♘d5! keeps the pieces on to enjoy the extra space; and if 18.♘g5 ♗f5∓ followed by ...h6 and a nice position with more squares for Black's minors.

Alexandra Botez

18.♗xe4 ♗d5 19.♕c2 ♖c7 20.♕b2 ♗xe4 21.dxe4 d3 22.exd3 ♕xd3 23.♖fc1 ♖xc1+ 24.♕xc1

White is missing her ♗g2, but with the ♘b8 so far away, there will be no time to take advantage of it.

24...♕xe4 25.♗e3 ♘d7 26.♘d2 ♕f5 27.♕c6 ♖b8



28.♖d1

28.♘e4!? ♗f8 29.♖d1 ♘c5 30.♗xc5 ♗xc5 31.♘xc5 bxc5 32.♕xc5±.

28...♕d3= 29.♕c4 ♕xc4 30.♘xc4 ♖b7= 31.♖d6 ♗f8 32.♖c6 ♗c5 33.♗xc5 ♘xc5 34.♘xe5 ♘e6 35.♖d6 ♘c5 36.♘c4 ♘a4 37.♔g2 ♘c3 38.♖xb6 ♖xb6 39.♘xb6 ♘xb5 40.♘d7 ♔g7 41.h3 ♘d4 42.g4 f6 43.♘c5 ♔f7 44.♔g3 ♘e6 45.♘e4 ♔e7 46.h4 ♘g7 47.♔f4

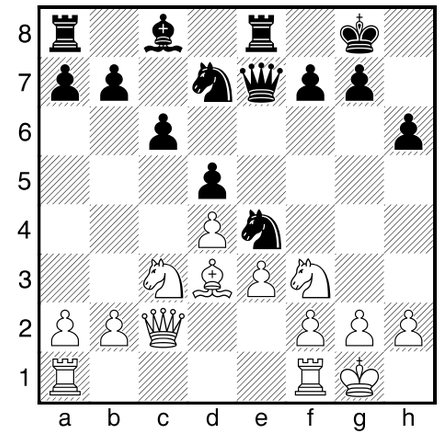
½-½

Ouellet, Maili−Jade (1992) Vega Jimenez, Keyshla M (1641)

D36
Women's Olympiad Baku (3.4), 04.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

A smooth game by Ouellet: she builds a nice center in a QGD exchange variation, her opponent sacs a pawn to relieve the pressure, and she nicely converts to attack.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♕c2 c6 6.♗g5 ♗e7 7.e3 0-0 8.♗d3 h6 9.♗h4 ♘bd7 10.♘f3 ♖e8 11.0-0 ♘e4 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7



13.♖ae1

Although not unknown, this move is more common when White has developed ...♘ge2, preparing f2-f3 and eventually e3-e4. With the ♘ already on f3, playing the minority attack seems more natural.

13.b4 ♘df6 14.b5 c5 15.dxc5 ♘xc5 16.♖ac1 ♘ce4 17.♕b2 ♗d7 18.h3 ♖ac8 19.♘e2 ♘c5 20.♗c2 ♘ce4 21.a4 ♘g5 22.♘fd4 ♖c4 23.♘f4± (0-1, 62) Van Wely,L−Sokolov,I Wijk aan Zee, 1995.

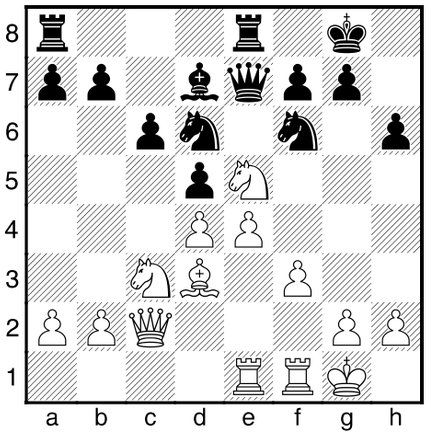
13...♘df6 14.♘e5 ♗d7?!

14...♗f5 15.f3 ♘xc3 16.♕xc3 *(16.♗xf5 ♘xa2)* 16...♗xd3= trades some pieces before White can start squeezing with e4.

15.f3 ♘d6

15...♘c5 16.♘xd7 ♘cxd7 17.e4±. 15...♘xc3 exchanging pieces when short of space, though White is still better after either recapture.

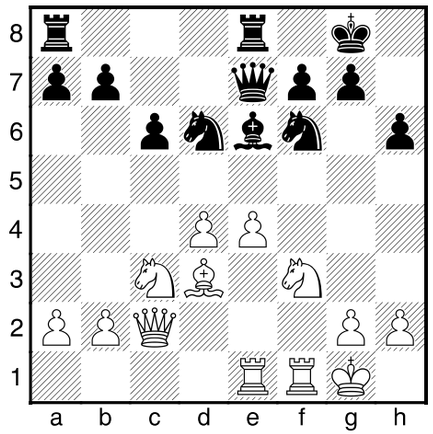
16.e4



16...dxe4

This exchange means that if White ever pushes e4-e5 then Black can put a piece on d5; but it also opens the f−file.

≤16...♖ac8 17.♘xd7 ♘xd7 18.e5±.
16...♗e6!? 17.♕f2 ♖ad8 challenges White to find a way through.
17.fxe4 ♗e6 18.♘f3±

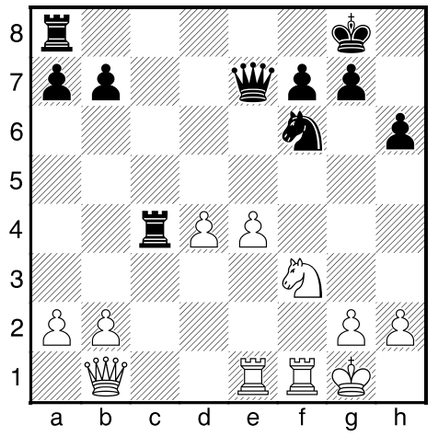


White has an ideal center and Black has no pressure on it, so she pitches a pawn to unclog.

18...♘b5
18...♘c8± doesn't give away any material, but is pretty sad.

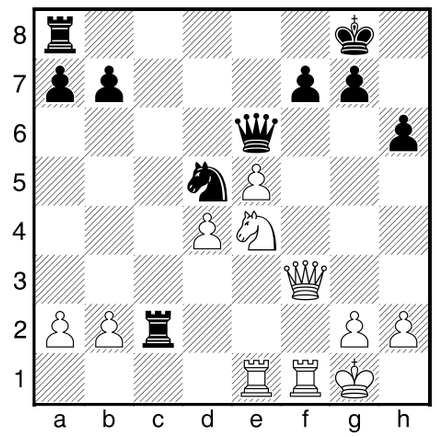
19.♘xb5 cxb5 20.♗xb5 ♖ec8 21.♕b1
21.♕f2 ♗xa2 22.e5 ♘d5 23.♘h4±.

21...♗c4 22.♗xc4 ♖xc4



23.e5
The first part of a strong attack. 23.♕d3! is also good, centralizing before defining the central structure.

23...♘d5 24.♕e4 ♕e6 25.♘d2 ♖c7 26.♕f3 ♖c2 27.♘e4!



27...♖xb2

before the round

Yuan, Ouellet, Zhou, Botez

27...b6 28.♘f6+! exploiting the pin to a8. 28...gxf6 29.exf6+-.

28.♘c5+-
Black can't defend both d5 and f7.

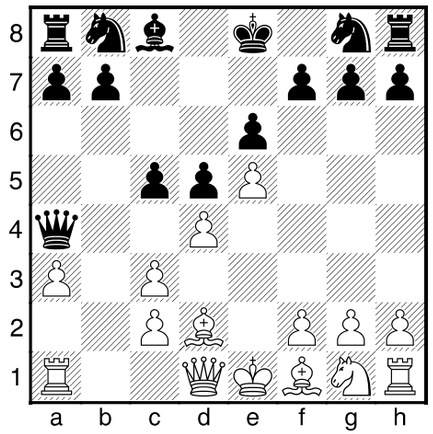
28...♕c6 29.♕xf7+ ♔h8 30.♖f3 ♖e8 31.♖g3 ♖e7 32.♕f8+ ♔h7 33.♕f5+ ♔h8 34.♖g6 ♘f6 35.♖f1 ♕d5 36.exf6 ♕xd4+ 37.♔h1

1-0

Zhou, Qiyu (2367)
Frayna, Janelle Mae (2281)
C18
WCO 2016 (4.1), 05.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♕a5
A positionally sound line which has the added advantage of reducing White's options (and Black's homework) in the Winawer.

7.♗d2 ♕a4



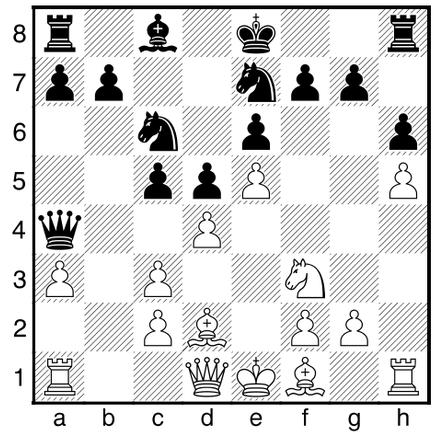
Watson calls this the "Portisch−Hook variation" after two of the first players to try it, and Moskalenko calls it "Black Queen Blues". Black's ♕a4 does more than blockade the a−pawn: it pressures a3, c2 and d4.

Almost all legal moves have been tried by White, a sign that there's no consensus on how best to tackle this defence.

8.h4

Negi's excellent 1.e4 repertoire book for Quality Chess recommends: 8.♕g4 g6 *(8...♔f8 9.♕d1 ♘c6 10.♕b1)* 9.♘f3 ♘c6 10.♗e2 and concludes, "The key to White's play here is to prevent Black from carrying out long castling... involving ♕h4 and ♗g5, which poses Black difficult problems."

8...♘c6 9.h5 h6 10.♘f3 ♘ge7



11.♖h4

11.♖b1 c4 12.g3 b6 13.♗h3 ♗d7 14.0-0 0-0-0 and White spent the rest of the game shuffling his pieces, unable to come up with a promising plan in Karjakin,S−Radjabov,T Shamkir, 2016 (½-½, 33).

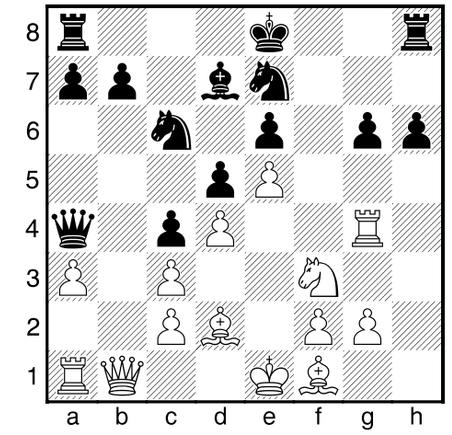
11...♗d7 12.♖g4

12.♖f4 g5 13.hxg6 ♘xg6 14.♖f6 cxd4 15.♗d3 ♘gxe5 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.♕h5 ♘xd3+ *(17...dxc3!)* 18.cxd3 ♖h7 (½-½, 62) Zeng,C (2400)−Hoang,T (2435) Chennai, 2012.

12...g5

12...♘f5!?

13.hxg6 fxg6 14.♕b1 c4



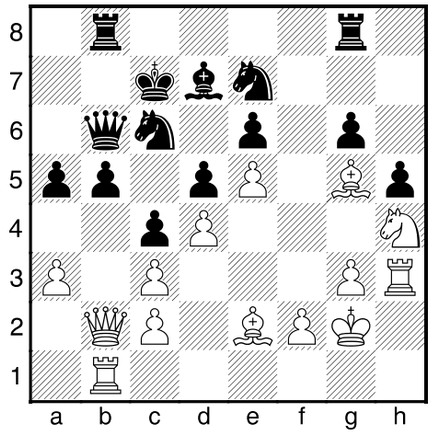
15.♖h4

15.♕xb7?? ♖b8 16.♕c7 ♕xc2-+ or 16...♖c8 and Black can force a repetition.

15...h5 16.♘g5 ♘f5 17.♖h3 ♔e7 18.♗e2 b5 19.g3 ♖af8 20.♔f1 ♔d8 21.♔g2 ♔c7 22.♕b2 ♕a5 23.♘f3 ♖b8 24.♖ah1

24.♗g5.

24...♖hg8 25.♖b1 ♕b6 26.♘h4 ♘fe7 27.♗g5 a5



28.♘f3
28.♕c1!? heading for the kingside now that the pressure is off c2 and c3.

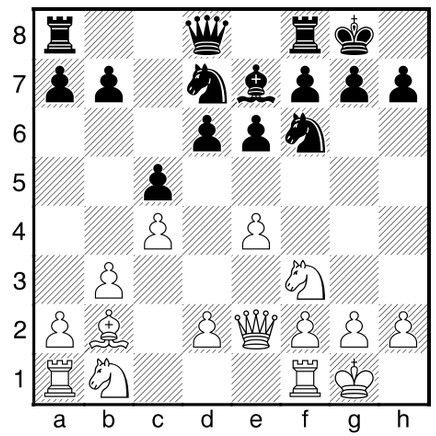
28...♘f5 29.♘h4 ♘fe7 30.♘f3 ♘f5 31.♘h4

½-½

Fronda, Jan Jodilyn (2128)
Yuan, Yuanling (2205)
B52
Women's Olympiad Baku (4.2), 05.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

White builds slowly to an attack in a b3 Sicilian, Black plays an exchange sac then outmaneuvers her opponent in a QR v QB ending. Odd fact: Black's Queen travels all over the board, but never once lands on or crosses any of the four center squares.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+ ♗d7 4.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 5.b3 ♘gf6 6.♕e2 e6 7.♗b2 ♗e7 8.c4 0-0 9.0-0



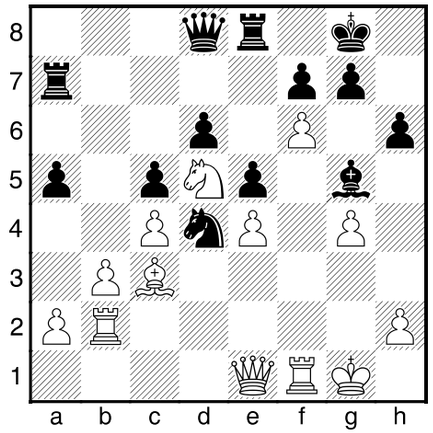
9...e5
Black could allow White to play d4, but with the ♗b2 it makes some sense to block the dark squares and ask White if she can activate her own ♗.

9...a6 10.d4 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♖e8 12.♘c3 ♖c8 13.♖ad1 ♕a5 14.♔h1 ♕h5 15.♕xh5 ♘xh5 16.g3 ♘hf6 (½-½, 56) Anand,V − Carlsen,M Mainz, 2008.

10.♘c3 ♖e8
10...g6 11.a3 ♘h5 12.g3 ♘g7 13.b4 b6 14.♘d5 f5 15.exf5 ♘xf5 16.bxc5 *(16.d4!?)* 16...bxc5 17.♗c3 ♘f6 18.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 19.♕e4 ♕d7 20.♖ab1 ♖ab8 21.d3 ♘e7 22.♗d2 ♕f5 23.♔g2= (1-0, 43) Kamsky,G−Alterman,B Tilburg, 1993.

11.♘e1
A standard regrouping against c5 and e5: ♘f3-e1-c2-e3-d5.

11...♘f8 12.f4 ♘e6 13.f5 ♘d4 14.♕d1 a6 15.d3 b5 16.g4 h6 17.♘g2 bxc4 18.dxc4 ♖b8 19.♘e3 ♘h7 20.♘cd5 ♗g5 21.♘g2 a5 22.♗c3 ♘f6 23.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 24.♘e3 ♗g5 25.♘d5 ♖b7 26.♖b1 ♖a7 27.♖b2 ♕d7 28.♕e1 ♕d8 29.f6



29...♖e6

29...♗xf6 looks bad, but Black seems to be OK, as White's ♔ is also exposed; e.g. 30.♘xf6+ gxf6 31.♕h4 *(31.♗xd4 exd4! 32.♕h4 ♖xe4 33.♖bf2 ♕e7 34.♖xf6 a4⇄)* 31...♖e6 32.♖bf2 ♕a8!?.

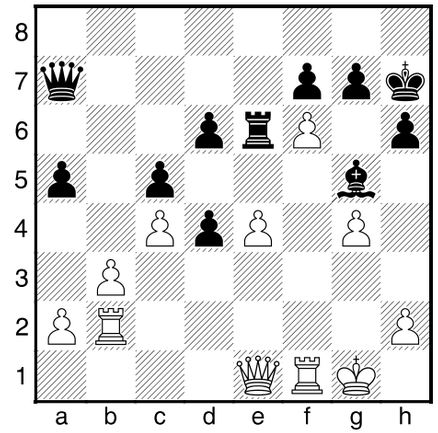
30.♘e7+

⌓30.fxg7.

30...♔h7

30...♖exe7=.

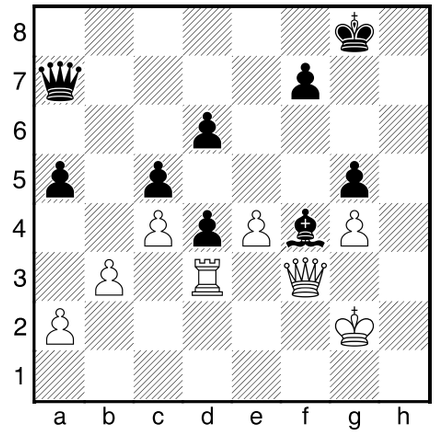
31.♗xd4 exd4 32.♘c6 ♕b6 33.♘xa7 ♕xa7



34.♖e2

34.fxg7!∞ White might have been worried about dropping the e−pawn, but the tactics work for her: 34...♗e3+ 35.♔h1 ♖xe4 36.♕b1 ♕b7 and Black would just need to move her King to win, but it's White's turn: 37.♖xf7□+-.

34...♗xf6 35.♖f3 ♔g8 36.♔g2 ♕a8 37.h4 ♕d8 38.♔h3 ♗e5∓ 39.♖ef2 ♖f6 40.♖xf6 ♗xf6 41.♖f5 ♗e5 42.♕f1 ♕d7 43.♕e1 ♕a7 44.♖f3 ♕a8 45.♕e2 ♕a7 46.♖d3 ♗f4 47.♕f3 g5 48.hxg5 hxg5 49.♔g2



Does Black have any weak pawns?

49...a4!

Not any more.

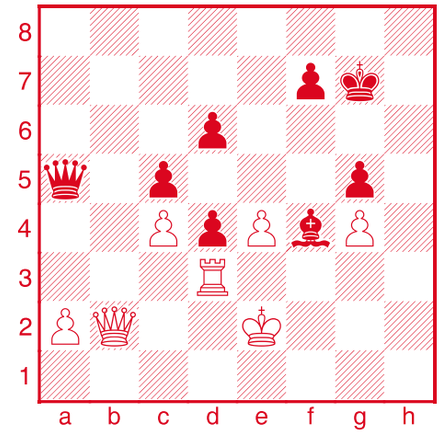
50.♕d1 axb3 51.♕xb3

White now has a passed a−pawn, but it won't go anywhere because her pieces will be too tied up defending against threats from the black ♕.

51.axb3 ♕a2+ 52.♔f1 ♕h2 53.♕f3∓ is an attempt to cover all the entry points.

51...♕a8 52.♔f3 ♔g7 53.♕b2 ♕a5 54.♔e2?

54.♕e2∓.



White has four isolated pawns, but Black can attack them only with her ♕. What should she play?

54...♕a4□

Forcing the white ♕ up to b3 to defend c4.

55.♕b3 ♕a8! 56.♔f3 ♕h8!

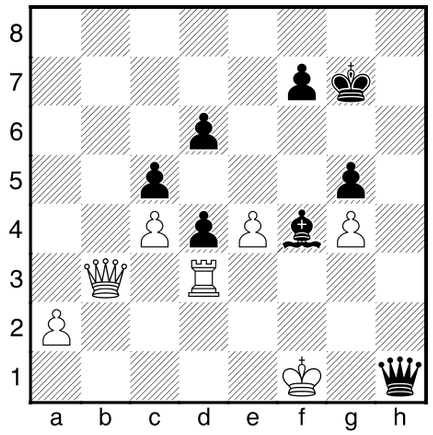
This is the point of 54...♕a4: if White's ♕ was still on b2 White could play ♕g2 to defend the h−file.

57.♔g2 ♕h2+!

57...♕h7 looks good too, but it gives White a chance to muddy the waters: 58.♖h3!? ♕xe4+ 59.♔f2 ♗e3+ 60.♖xe3 dxe3+ 61.♕xe3 and the computer

says Black is winning, but she definitely has a harder job ahead of her than with the game line.

58.♔f1 ♕h1+



Three corners in four moves and Black is winning.

59.♔f2 ♕h4+

59...♕xe4 60.♖h3 transposes to the previous variation.

60.♔f1 ♕xg4 61.♕c2

61.♖h3!? d5!! 62.exd5 *(62.cxd5 c4-+)* 62...♗e3 63.♖xe3 dxe3 64.♕xe3 ♕xc4+-+.

61...♕e6

61...♕h5! is more active, and the Black ♕ goes back to the h−file soon.

62.♖f3 ♗e5 63.a4 g4 64.♖f5 ♕h6! 65.♖f2 g3 66.♖f3 ♕h1+ 67.♔e2

The next few moves might be recording errors.

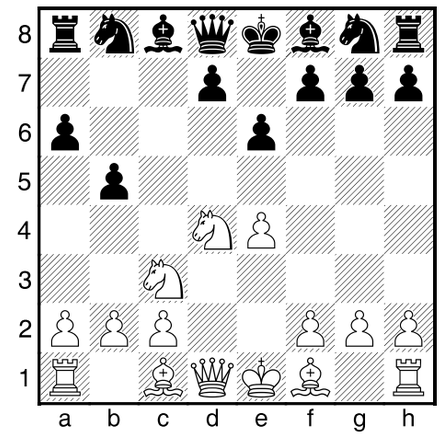
67...g2!? 68.♖g3+ ♔h6!? 69.♖xg2 ♕xg2+ 70.♔d1 ♕f1+

0-1

Mendoza, Shania Mae (1965)
Ouellet, Maili−Jade (1992)
B43
Women's Olympiad Baku (4.4), 05.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

A horror show for Black, who tries to play a ...d5 “break” in the Sicilian... but times it to allow White to close the center with e4−e5, leaving Black with no central or queenside play. White piles up on the kingside then blasts through with a piece sac.

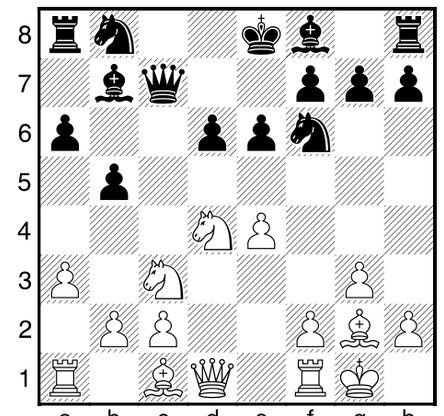
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♘c3 b5



6.a3

6.♗d3 is by far the most common move. 6...♕b6 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♕b8 9.♗g5 ♘ge7 10.a4 b4 11.♘e2 ♘g6 12.♘ed4 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♗d6∞ Ponomariov,R−Svidler,P Almaty, 2016.

6...♗b7 7.g3 ♘f6 8.♗g2 ♕c7 9.0-0 d6



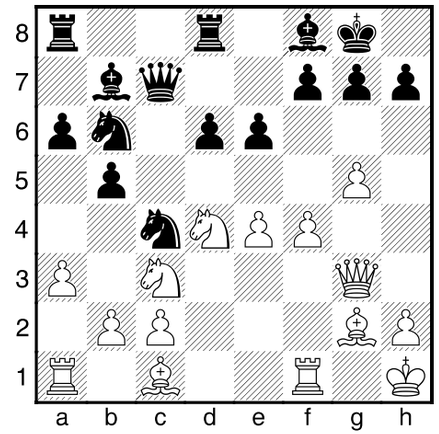
10.♗e3

10.♖e1 ♗e7 11.a4 b4 12.♘a2 0-0 13.♗g5 *(13.♘xb4!? d5 14.♗f4N (14.e5 ♗xb4 15.exf6 ♗xe1∞ Boidman,Y (2411)−Siebrecht,S (2453) Lausanne, 2008.) Δ14... e5 15.♘xd5 ♘xd5□ 16.♗xe5!↑)* 13...♘bd7 14.♕d2 a5= (½-½, 43) Topalov,V−Short,N Dortmund, 1997.

10...♘bd7 11.♖e1 ♗e7

11...♘b6? 12.e5! dxe5 13.♘dxb5! axb5 14.♘xb5±.

12.f4 0-0 13.g4 ♘b6 14.g5 ♘fd7 15.♔h1 ♘c4 16.♗c1 ♖fd8 17.♕g4 ♗f8 18.♖f1 ♘db6 19.♕g3

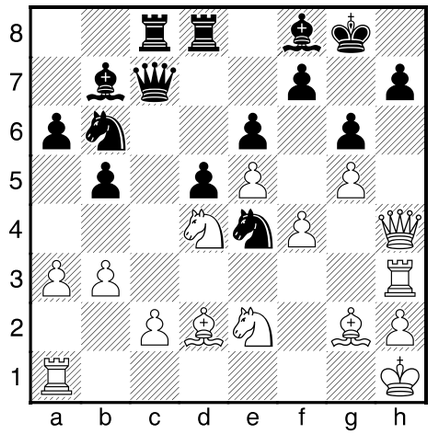


19...d5?

After this Black will struggle to create meaningful queenside or central play.

20.e5! ♖ac8 21.♘ce2 ♘d7 22.b3 ♘cb6
22...♘a5 heading to c6 to pressure the center would give the ♘ something to do.

23.♗d2 g6 24.♕h4 ♘c5 25.♖f3 ♘e4 26.♖h3



The position resembles a horrible Steinitz French, where White's ♘d4 shuts down play on the c−file and on the a8-diagonal.

26...h5
Black was banking on this to stop the attack, but that was only the first wave.

26...h6!? might be a good practical try to surprise White, who wouldn't want to take on h6, but couldn't sac a piece on h5.

27.♗a5
27.gxh6? ♗e7 makes the White h−pawn an unbreakable defender.

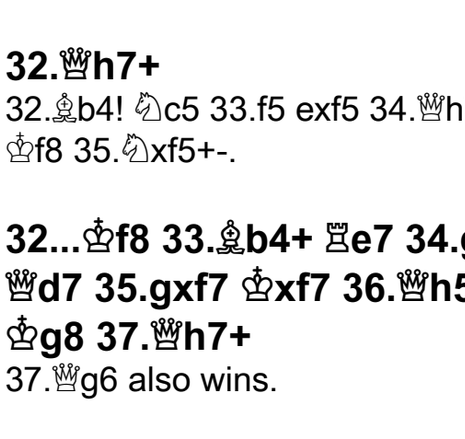
27.♗f3!? sacs a piece for a strong attack, but White has no reason to hurry, 27...♘xd2 28.♗xh5 gxh5 29.♕xh5 ♗g7 30.♖g1∞

27...♖d7?
27...♗g7!? is a normal defensive move (guarding h8 and preparing to escape via f8) but it doesn't seem good enough to stop White, who can build up with ♖f1 and ♗f3xh5 anyway.

27...♗c5! indirectly helps defend the h−file. 28.♗f3 ♔g7 Δ29.♗xh5? ♖h8-+

28.♗f3+- ♗a8 29.♔g2
Gets out of ...♘f2+ before taking on h5.

29...♖b8 30.♗xh5 gxh5 31.♕xh5 ♗g7

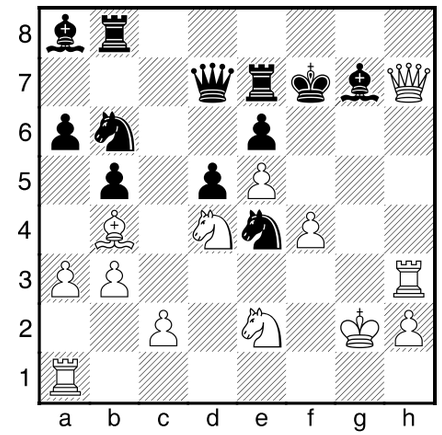


Black's queenside pieces have nothing to do, so even though White has "only" two pawns for the ♗, computers show mutiple ways to win and rate this around +10.

32.♕h7+
32.♗b4! ♘c5 33.f5 exf5 34.♕h7+ ♔f8 35.♘xf5+-.

32...♔f8 33.♗b4+ ♖e7 34.g6 ♕d7 35.gxf7 ♔xf7 36.♕h5+ ♔g8 37.♕h7+
37.♕g6 also wins.

37...♔f7



38.f5
38.♖g1! also wins: 38...♖h8 39.♕xg7+! ♔xg7 40.♔f3++-.

38...exf5 39.♗xe7
39.♘xf5!+- also wins, but White gives the impression that she wants to win while never giving the ♗a8 even a hope at fresh air (via ...d4).

39...♖h8 40.♕xh8
Again, not the only win: 40.e6+ ♕xe6 41.♘xe6 ♖xh7 42.♖xh7 ♔xe7 43.♘2d4+-.

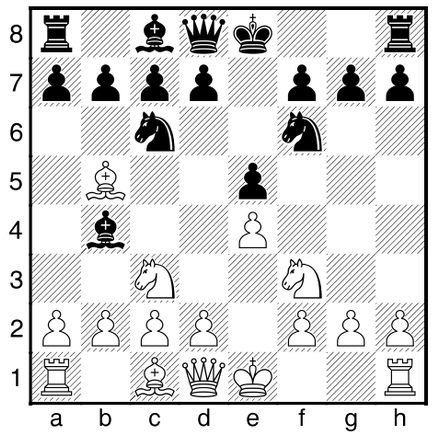
40...♗xh8 41.e6+ ♕xe6 42.♖h7+ ♔g6 43.♘f4+ ♔xh7 44.♘fxe6 ♘c8

45.♗h4 ♘cd6 46.♖g1 ♔g6 47.♔f3+ ♔f7 48.♘d8+
White will win the ♗h8 too.

1-0

Ramirez, Maria Eugenia (2104)
Zhou, Qiyu (2367)
C49
Women's Olympiad Baku (5.25), 06.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗b4
4...♘d4 is the second most common move, and scores about as well.



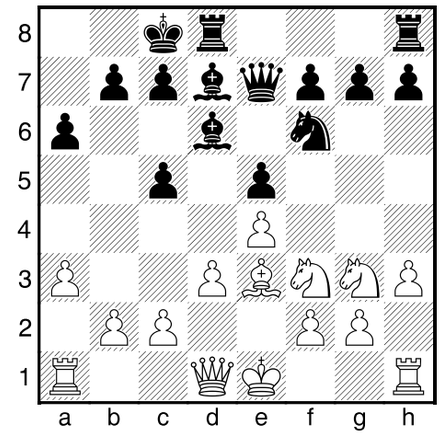
5.♗xc6
White can't expect an advantage with this, but she's much lower−rated and Black's chances are a long way off with the B−pair.

5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.♘e2 *(7.♗g5 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♕e7 9.♖e1 ♘d8 10.d4 ♘e6 11.♗c1 c5 12.a4 ♖d8 13.♗c4±* (1-0, 34) Shirov,A (2740)−Lesiege,A (2460) North Bay, 1994.*)* 7...♘e7 8.c3 ♗a5 9.♘g3 ♘g6 10.d4 ♗b6 11.♖e1 c6 12.♗d3 (1-0, 43) Anand,V−Mamedyarov,S Shamkir, 2015.

5...dxc6 6.d3
6.♘xe5 ♕e7 7.♘d3 ♗xc3 8.dxc3 ♕xe4+ 9.♕e2= 0-0 10.♕xe4 ♘xe4 11.♗f4 ♘d6 12.0-0-0 ♗f5 ½-½ Munoz Pantoja,M (2457)−Gonzalez Perez,A (2466) Cornella, 2013.

6...♕e7 7.h3 ♗d7
7...0-0 8.♗g5 ♕e6 9.♘d2 ♘e8 10.a3 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♘d6 12.♗e3 Hasangatin,R (2400)−Moizhess,I (2445) Moscow, 1996.

8.♗e3 a6N 9.a3 ♗d6 10.♘e2 c5 11.♘g3 0-0-0



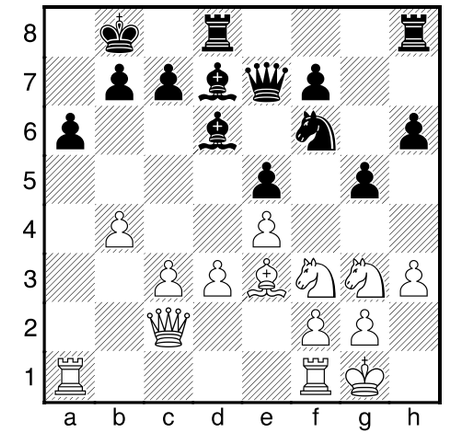
Computers like this, but it's very risky, and not very savvy, since it makes it easy for White to choose a plan.

12.c3 h6 13.♕c2 ♔b8
⌓***13...g6.***
⌓***13...g5*** 14.b4 ♔b8 *(14...g4 15.♘h4! ♘xe4? 16.♘hf5+-)* 15.bxc5 ♗xc5 16.d4 *(16.♗xc5 ♕xc5)* 16...exd4 17.cxd4 ♗b6 18.0-0 g4 is the opposite−side action Black was probably hoping for.

14.b4 g6
Changing gears?
14...g5! 15.♖b1 *(15.♘d2!?)* 15... cxb4 *(15...g4∞)* 16.axb4.

15.0-0 cxb4??
Strategic suicide. Black opens the a−file and now White gets a strong attack. 15...♘h5!?

16.axb4 g5



17.b5!+- a5?!
Had Black missed this:
17...♗xb5? 18.c4 ♗c6 19.c5 trapping the ♗d6.

17...g4 is trickier, but White wins if she just piles up against the black King: 18.bxa6 b6 *(18...gxf3 19.axb7+-)* 19.♘d2 gxh3 20.♘c4 hxg2 21.♖fb1 and White crashes through first.

18.♖xa5 b6 19.♖a8+!
The rest is a slaughter.

19...♔b7
19...♔xa8 20.♕a4+ ♔b7 21.♕a6+ ♔b8 22.♖a1+-.

20.♖a7+ ♔b8 21.♖fa1
21.♕a4 ♗xb5 22.♕xb5 ♔xa7 23.♖a1+ ♔b7 24.♕a6+ ♔c6+- 25.♕c4+ ♔d7 26.♕b5+ ♔e6 27.♘d4+ exd4 28.♕f5#.

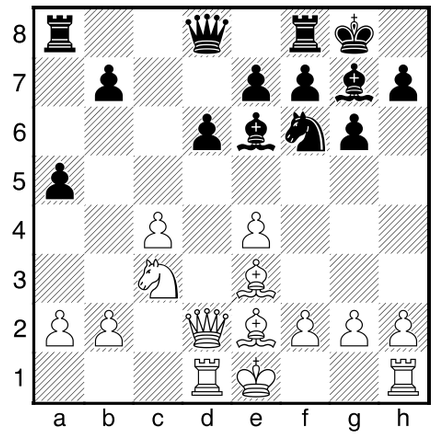
21...♗xb5 22.c4 ♗c6 23.♗xb6! ♕e6 24.♗e3 ♔c8 25.♖1a6! ♗b7 26.c5! ♗xa6 27.♖xa6
27.c6 is #10

27...♔d7 28.cxd6 cxd6 29.♘f5 ♖c8 30.♕a4+

1-0

Yuan, Yuanling (2205)
Monroy G., Nataly A. (2105)
B36
Women's Olympiad Baku (5.26), 06.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 d6 7.♗e2 ♘xd4 8.♕xd4 ♗g7 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♕d2 a5 11.♖d1 ♗e6



There is a ChessBase DVD by Tiviakov on the Maroczy which covers these structures and middlegames. It's not a very exciting DVD or system, but as Tiviakov keeps reminding viewers, it's solid enough to help him draw against 2700 players.

12.a4
This stops ...a4 and ...♕a5 (Tiviakov's favourite strategy); but making the queenside static while Black has good control over c5 should leave Black comfortably equal, and a Black ♘c5 will constantly attack a4 and b3, and so restrict White's freedom.

12.0-0 a4 13.f4 ♕a5 14.♗d4 ♖fe8 15.♕d3 ♖ad8 *(15...♖ec8 16.b3 axb3 17.axb3 ♕b4 18.f5 ♗d7 19.♗xf6!±)* 16.♔h1 ♗d7 17.♕e3 ♖c8 18.h3 ♗c6 19.e5 ♘d7 20.exd6 *(20.e6!)* 20...exd6 21.♕f2 ♘f6 22.f5 g5 23.h4 g4 *(23...♘e4!)* 24.h5 ♘e4 25.♘xe4 ♗xd4 26.♖xd4 ♖xe4 27.♖xe4 ♗xe4 28.♗xg4± 1-0 (42) Giri,A–Tiviakov,S Hoogeveen, 2010.

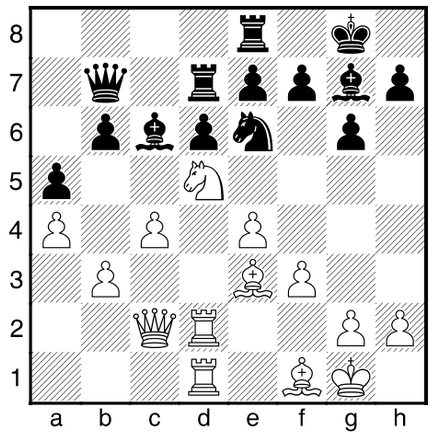
12...♘d7 13.♘b5 ♘c5
With the ♘c5 it is hard to see how White can make any progress.

14.♕c2 ♕c8 15.♘d4 ♗d7 16.b3 ♕c7 17.0-0 ♗c6 18.♗d3 b6 19.f3 ♖ad8 20.♖d2
20.♕f2!?

20...♖d7 21.♖fd1 ♖fd8 22.♗f1 ♕b7 23.♘e2 ♘e6

Charmed, I'm sure. *Yuanling and Danny King*

24.♘c3 ♖e8 25.♘d5



The double attack on b6 looks like it necessitates ...♗xd5, but the computer shows that's not so:

25...♗xd5

A computer line is: 25...♖dd8!? 26.♘xb6 *(26.♗xb6 ♖b8 or 26...♗xd5!?∞)* 26...♖b8 27.♖d3 ♘c5 28.♗xc5 dxc5 29.♘d5 e6 30.♘e3 f5!?⩱ *or 30...♗d4⩱* Δ...f5.

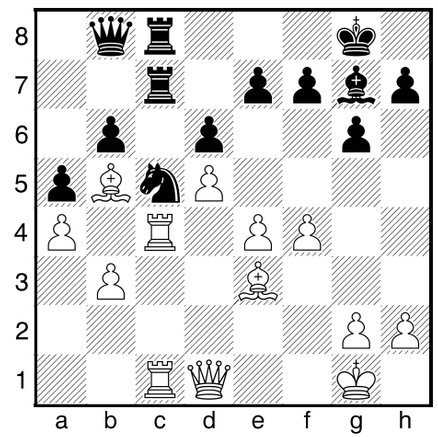
26.cxd5

26.exd5 ♘c5 27.g3 *(27.♗d4? ♗xd4+ 28.♖xd4∓)* 27...e5 28.dxe6 ♘xe6 29.♖xd6 ♖xd6 30.♖xd6 ♗f8 31.♖d1 ♕xf3 32.♗xb6 ♘g5= threatening ...♖e2 and ...♘h3.

26...♖c7 27.♕b1

27.dxe6 is not so stupid, but 27...♖xc2 28.exf7+ ♔xf7 29.♖xc2 this doesn't give White any realistic winning.

27...♘c5 28.♗b5 ♖ec8 29.♖c2 ♕a7 30.♖dc1 ♗e5 31.♖c4 ♖b8 32.♕c2 ♖bc8 33.f4 ♗g7 34.♕d1 ♕b8



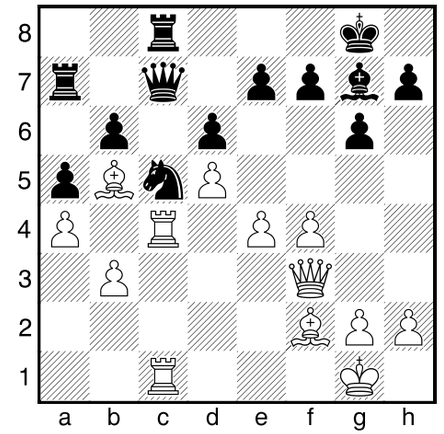
35.♗f2?

⩲35.f5.

35...♖a7?

Doesn't 35...♘xe4 just win a pawn? Maybe the game score is wrong, and the actual sequence was 35.♕f3 then 36.♗f2.

36.♕f3 ♕c7



37.♗d4

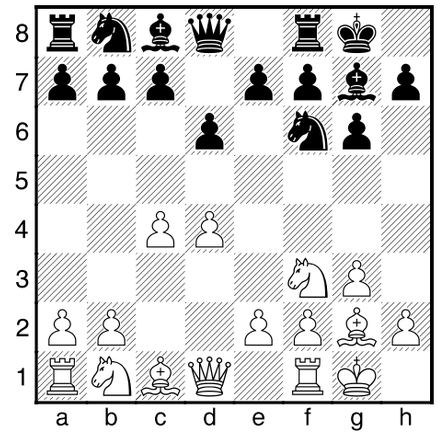
This trades both the good ♗s, and leaves White unable to budge the gatekeeper on c5. That's not necessarily bad, but it might be better to begin opening lines on the kingside first, as the absent ♗g7 makes it easier for Black to get defenders around her King. For instance, 37.♖4c2!? preparing to switch to the kingside with h2-h4-h5.

37...♗xd4+ 38.♖xd4 ♕d8 39.♖dc4 ♕f8 40.e5 ♕g7 41.♖e1 ♖d8 42.♗c6 e6! 43.b4 axb4 44.♖xb4 dxe5 45.♖xe5 exd5 46.♗xd5 ♖ad7 47.♖xb6 ♘xa4 48.♖b1 ♕f8 49.♔h1 ♖xd5 50.♖xd5 ♖xd5 51.♕xd5 ♘c3 52.♕d3 ♘xb1 53.♕xb1 ♕d6 54.♕c1 h5 55.h3 ♔g7 56.♕c3+ ♕f6 57.♕e3 ♕a1+

½-½

Cordero, Daniela (1954)
Botez, Alexandra (2092)
E69
Women's Olympiad Baku (5.27), 06.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.g3 0-0 5.♗g2 d6 6.0-0



6...c6

This is the Boleslavsky system against the g3-KID. It's less

popular than the Yugoslav system (with ...♘c6 and ...c5) but its fluid pawn center makes it strategically more complex, and should give the better player decent chances from either side.

6...♘c6 7.♘c3 a6 8.d5 ♘a5 9.♘d2 c5 10.♕c2 ♖b8 11.b3 b5 is the Yugoslav system, with thousands of games.

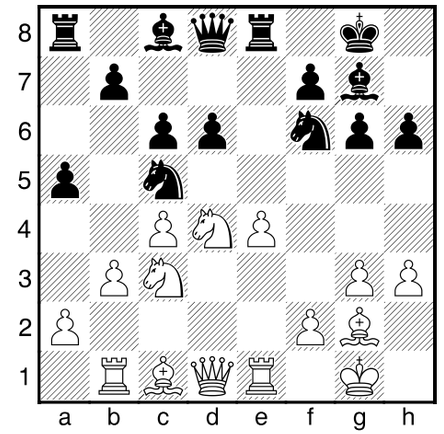
7.♘c3 ♘bd7 8.e4 e5 9.h3 exd4

9...♖e8 10.♗e3 a5 11.d5 ♕c7 12.♘d2 b6 13.♕c2 ♘c5 14.♖fc1 ♗d7 15.dxc6 ♗xc6 16.♘b3 ♘cd7 17.♘d2 h5 18.♘d5 ♕b8 19.b3 ♘c5 20.a3 (½-½, 42) Melkumyan,H−Kamsky,G Baku 2015

10.♘xd4 ♘c5 11.♖e1 ♖e8 12.♖b1 a5 13.b3 h6

Now that you mention it, there was the traditional Bermuda Party.

Why do you ask?



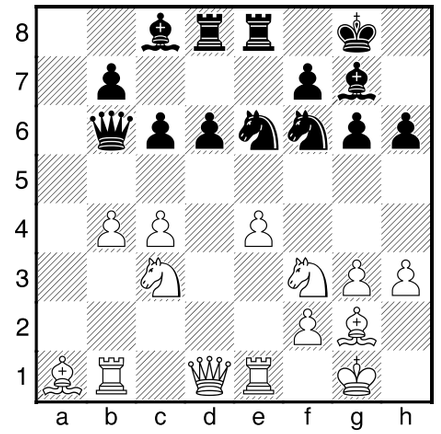
14.♗b2

14.♔h2 ♗d7 15.♗f4 ♕c7 16.a3 ♘h5 17.♗e3 ♘f6 18.♗f4 ♘h5 19.♗e3 ♘f6 20.♕c2 ♖e7 *(20...h5!?)* 21.♖bd1 ♖ae8 22.♗f4 g5 23.♘db5 cxb5 24.♗xd6 ♕c8 25.♗xe7 ♖xe7 26.♘xb5± Pigusov,E−Akopian,V Novosibirsk, 1993.

14...♗d7 15.a3 ♕b6 16.♗a1

16.♘a4!? ♘xa4 17.bxa4 ♕c7 18.♗c3 and White has another half−open file for pressure.

16...♖ad8 17.b4 axb4 18.axb4 ♘e6 19.♘f3 ♗c8



From a classical point of view it looks like White is comfortably better, with significantly more space and options for her Rooks. But Black's position is like the Hedgehog — no weaknesses and constantly pressuring White's pawns.

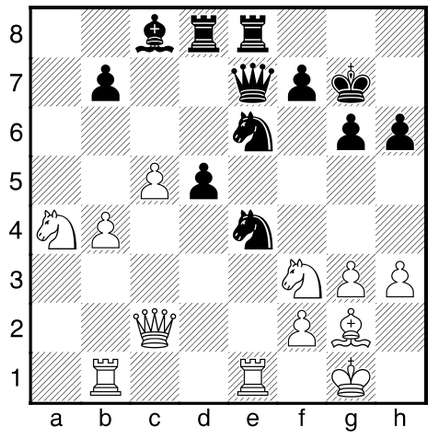
20.♕c2 ♕c7 21.♘a4 d5?!

21...b5!?:

22.e5 dxe5 23.♗xe5 ♘d4! 24.♗xd4! *(24.♘xd4? ♖xe5 25.♖xe5 ♖xd4!∓* and White is hanging on a4 and e5.*)* 24...♗f5 25.♕b2 ♗xb1 26.♖xb1 *(26.♗xf6 ♖xe1+ 27.♘xe1 ♗xf6 28.♕xf6)* 26...♖xd4 27.♘xd4 bxa4=;

22.cxb5 cxb5 23.♕xc7 ♘xc7 24.♘c3 White still has better structure.

22.♗e5 ♕e7 23.exd5 cxd5 24.c5± ♘e4 25.♗xg7 ♔xg7



26.♖bd1

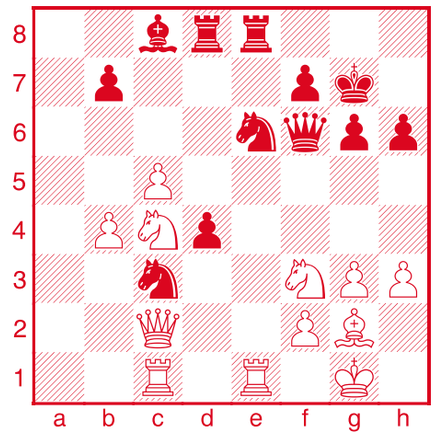
26.♕b2+ aiming to simplify and leave Black with weak pawns with no dynamic compensation: 26...♕f6 27.♕xf6+ ♘xf6 28.♘b6±.

26...♕f6
27.♘b6 ♘c3
28.♖c1

28.♖d3!? ♘d4 29.♖xd4! ♖xe1+ 30.♔h2±.

28...d4
29.♘c4?

29.♕d2!



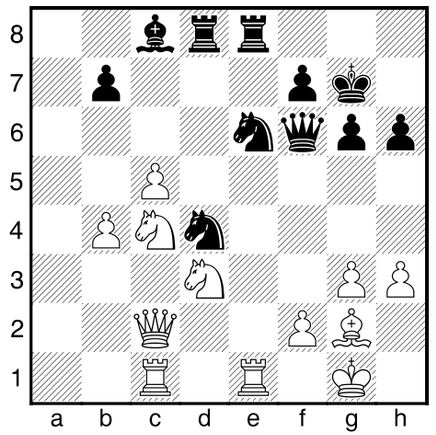
29...♘b5

Black misses a strong but very hard to see combo: 29...♘g5! 30.♘xg5 d3! 31.♕d2 ♘e2+ 32.♖xe2 *(32.♔h2 hxg5-+ or 32...♕xf2-+)* 32...♖xe2 33.♘e4 ♖xd2 34.♘xf6 ♖c2-+ White has two pieces for the exchange, but is hanging on c1, c4 and f6.

30.♘fe5 d3!?

A clearance sac to activate her pieces, making the game even more complicated.

31.♘xd3 ♘bd4



32.♕b2?!

⌓32.♕c3 ♘g5 33.♖xe8 ♖xe8 34.♘d6! allowing the fork on e2 in return for one on e8 34...♘e2+ 35.♔h2 ♕xc3 36.♘xe8+ ♔f8 37.♖xc3 ♘xc3 38.♘d6+- Black loses b7 and White's queenside pawns win.

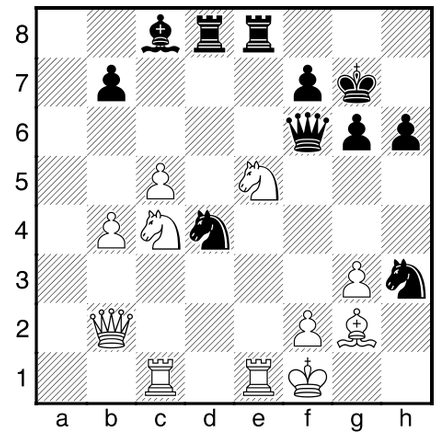
32...♘g5!⇄ 33.♘de5

33.♘d6? ♘df3+!-+ 34.♔f1 ♕xb2 35.♘xe8+ ♖xe8 36.♘xb2 ♘d2+□ 37.♔g1 ♘gf3+ 38.♗xf3 ♘xf3+ 39.♔f1? saves the Rook? 39...♗xh3#.

33...♘xh3+

33...♖xe5 34.♖xe5 ♗xh3 35.♗xh3 ♘xh3+ 36.♔g2 ♘g5∞.

34.♔f1



34...♘g5?

34...b5! Δ35.cxb6 ♗a6!∞ 36.f4 Defending e5 and hoping to trap the ♘h3, *(36.♗xh3 ♖xe5∓)* 36...♖xe5! 37.♖xe5 ♗xc4+ 38.♖xc4 ♘xf4□=.

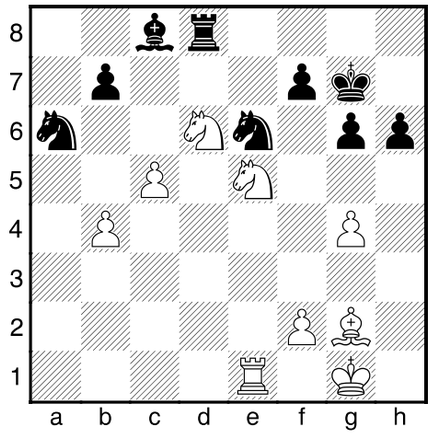
35.♖cd1

⌓35.f4!+-.

35...♘f5 36.♔g1 ♘e6
37.♘f3

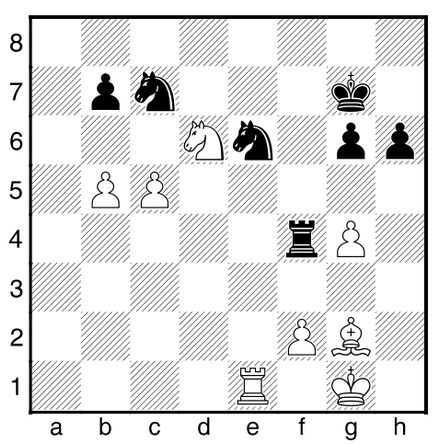
37.♖xd8 ♖xd8 38.♘b6± threatening both ♘d5 and ♘xc8 then ♗xb7.

37...♕xb2 38.♘xb2 ♘c7
39.♘c4 ♖xe1+ 40.♖xe1 ♘a6
41.g4 ♘d4 42.♘d6 ♘e6
43.♘e5



43...♘ac7??
⌓43...♘xb4 44.♘exf7 ♖f8 45.♘xc8 ♔xf7 46.♘d6+ ♔e7 47.♘xb7 ♘d3 and Black has good chances to hold.

44.♘exf7!+- ♖f8 45.♘xc8 ♖xf7 46.♘d6 ♖f4 47.b5!



Advancing the pawns with tactical threats against the black ♘s. White is winning.

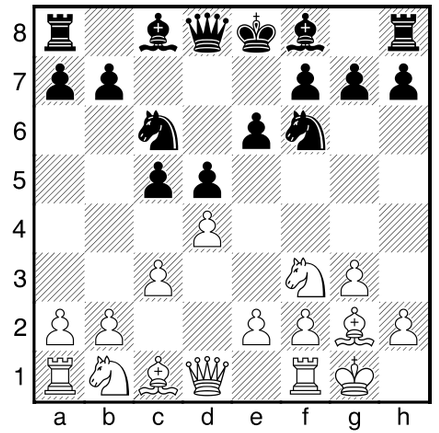
47...♔f6 48.b6 ♘a6 49.♘xb7 ♖b4
49...♘axc5 50.♘xc5 ♘xc5 51.♖c1!+-.

50.♖c1 ♘f4 51.♗f1 ♘xc5 52.♘xc5 ♘d5 53.b7 ♔e7 54.♗g2 ♘f4 55.♖e1+ ♔f7 56.♗e4 ♘h3+ 57.♔g2 ♘f4+ 58.♔g3 g5 59.♘a6 ♖b3+ 60.♗f3 h5 61.b8♕ h4+ 62.♔h2

1-0

Agbabishvili, Lali (2064)
Molina, Jessica (1883)
D02
Women's Olympiad Baku (5.28), 06.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 c5 4.d4 e6 5.0-0 ♘c6 6.c3
6.c4 would be aiming for a Grunfeld reversed (aka: Catalan)



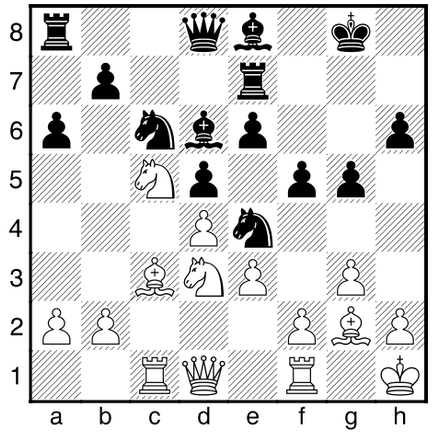
This is a Schlechter Slav/ Grunfeld reversed, which is about as solid an opening as possible. But if you can get a middle game which you know better than your opponent...
.

6...cxd4
In the following game White needed a draw to advance to the next round of the World Cup: 6...♗e7 7.♗g5 7...cxd4 8.cxd4 ♕b6 9.b3 ♗d7 10.♘c3 ♘e4 11.♘a4 ♕a5 12.♗xe7 ♔xe7 13.a3 b6 14.♕d3 ♖ac8 15.♖fc1 ♘b8 16.♘e5? Natural, but very bad. Black exploits White's weak back rank and offside ♘a4 to take control of the c−file and the game: 16...♖xc1+ 17.♖xc1 ♖c8!∓ 18.♖d1 *(18.♖xc8? ♕e1+*

Taking a Team Out
clockwise: Ouellet, Yuan, Cristian Chirila, Hambleton, Botez, Hansen, Zhou, Agbabishvili

is mating.) 18...♗xa4 19.♗xe4 (19.bxa4 ♕xa4 Black is just up a pawn for nothing.) 19...dxe4 20.♕xe4 ♗c6-+ (0-1, 71) Azmaiparashvili,Z−Bareev,E Shenyang, 2000.

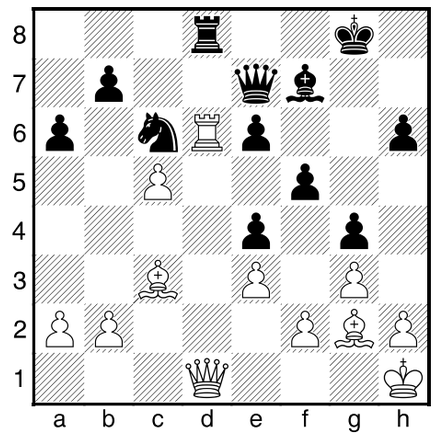
7.cxd4 ♗d6 8.♘c3 a6 9.♗g5 0-0 10.♖c1 h6 11.♗e3 ♗d7 12.♔h1 ♘g4 13.♗d2 f5 14.e3 g5 15.♘e1 ♘f6 16.♘d3 ♗e8= 17.♘a4 ♖f7 18.♘ac5 ♖e7 19.♗c3 ♘e4



20.♘xe4 dxe4
20...fxe4 21.♘c5 b6 22.♘b3=.

21.♘c5 ♗xc5 22.dxc5 ♖d7 23.♕b3 ♗f7 24.♖fd1 g4?!
⌓24...e5 25.♖xd7 ♕xd7 26.♖d1 ♕e7 27.♕b6 *(27.♕a3 ♖d8=)* 27...♗xa2±.

25.♖xd7 ♕xd7 26.♖d1 ♕e7 27.♖d6 ♖d8 28.♕d1±



White has the only open file, the Bishop pair, and a mobile queenside majority. Black collapses quickly.

28...♖xd6?!
28...e5±.

29.cxd6 ♕d7 30.♗xe4!+-
Making the best use of the unopposed ♗c3.

30...h5
30...fxe4 31.♕xg4+ ♔f8 32.♕g7+ ♔e8 33.♕h8+ ♗g8 34.♕xg8#.

31.♗g2 ♘e7? 32.♕d4
Safetys the queen with tempo gain, winning the ♘ and the game.

32...♔f8 33.dxe7+

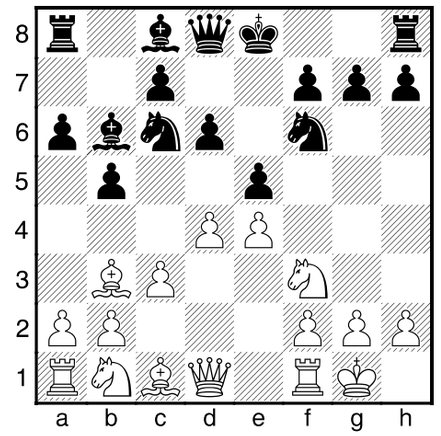
1-0

Notes by WIM Yuanling Yuan

Yuan, Yuanling (2205)
Unuk, Laura (2332)
C78
Women's Olympiad Baku (7.24), 09.09.2016

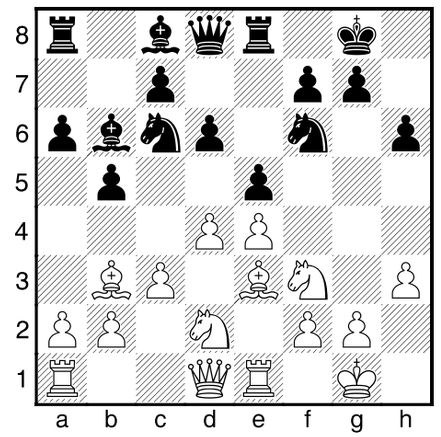
The Canadian women's team was paired against Slovenia in round 7 after defeating Portgual in the previous round. Two years ago at the Norway Olympiad we had lost to Slovenia but this time was different. We had a much stronger team and we were all prepared to fight! I was paired against Laura Unuk, a talented 17-year−old. She was my toughest opponent yet.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 ♗c5 7.c3 d6 8.d4 ♗b6



9.♗e3
9.a4 ♗g4 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♗g5 ♖b8 12.♕d3 ♗xf3 13.♗d5 ♘xd4± *(13...♗xe4!?)* Kosteniuk,A (2525) −Stefanova,A (2548) Beijing (blitz), 2008 (1-0, 40).

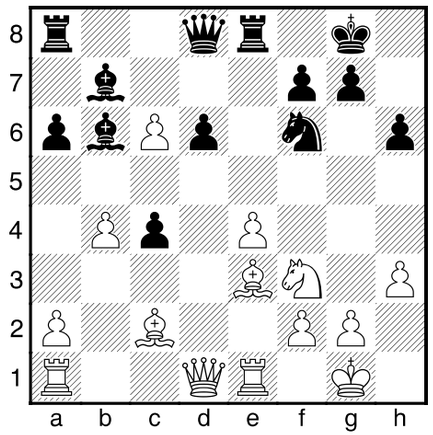
9...0-0 10.h3 h6 11.♘bd2 ♖e8 12.♖e1



12...exd4

Up until this point everything was still in my prep book. After ...exd4, I was on my own!

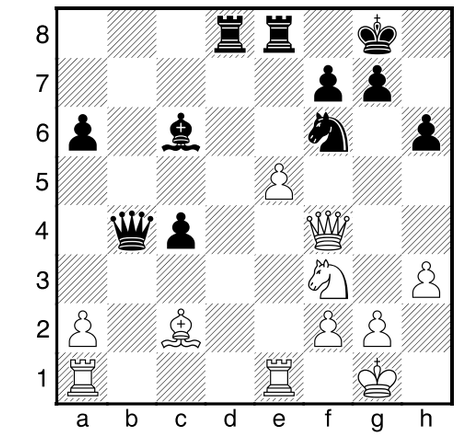
13.cxd4 ♘a5 14.♗c2 ♗b7 15.d5 c6 16.b4 ♘c4 17.♘xc4 bxc4 18.dxc6



18...♗xc6

18...♗xe3? looks good initially but is actually disastrous for Black after: 19.cxb7 ♗xf2+ 20.♔xf2 ♕b6+ 21.♕d4 ♕xb7 22.♕xd6 ♖ad8 23.♕c5 ♖c8 24.♕f5+- White's up a piece and my King is safe and I'm threatening e4-e5 next move.

19.♗xb6 ♕xb6 20.♕xd6 ♖ad8 21.♕f4 ♕xb4 22.e5



She spent a long time thinking here, as if she just discovered what I've been scheming.

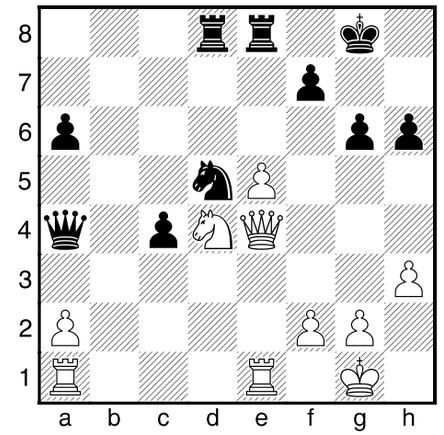
22...♘d5

22...♗xf3 is better 23.♕xf3 ♕b2 *(23...♘d7 24.♖ad1 ♘f8= (0-1, 45) Mammadzada,G (2316)−* Durarbayli,V *(2621) Doha, 2014.)* 24.♕f5 *(24.exf6 ♖xe1+ 25.♖xe1 ♕xc2=)* 24...♖d5 25.♖ab1 ♕d4 26.♖bd1 ♕c3 27.f4=.

23.♕e4 g6 24.♘d4

I was debating between ♘d4 and ♕h4 here, but eventually decided to go with ♘d4 − the knight looks too good on that square to turn it down! 24.♕h4 ♔g7 25.♖ab1 ♕c5 26.♘d4 ♖e7 27.e6 ♗e8 28.♖e5±.

24...♗a4 25.♗xa4 ♕xa4

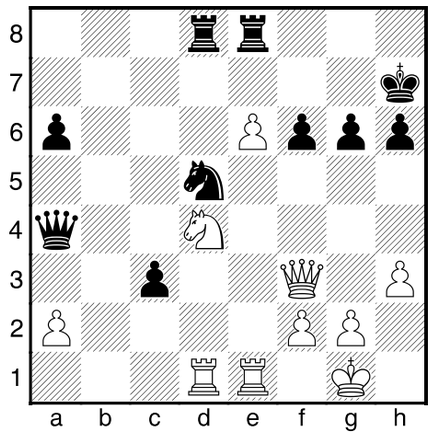


26.e6 ♔h7?
26...f5 the move I was expecting 27.♕e5±.

27.♕f3 f6
Black's queen is totally stuck on the side and away from the action.

27...f5?? 28.♘xf5! gxf5 29.♕xf5+ ♔h8 30.♕g6 ♖e7 31.♕xh6+ ♖h7 32.e7!+- Black's ♕ is a distant spectator, and 32...♖e8 33.♕f8+ is lights out.

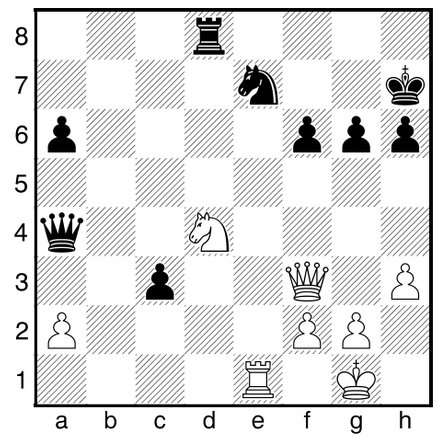
28.♖ad1 c3



29.e7?
At this point I was already in time pressure. The formula is simple: complex position + time trouble = e6−e7 was not the best move.

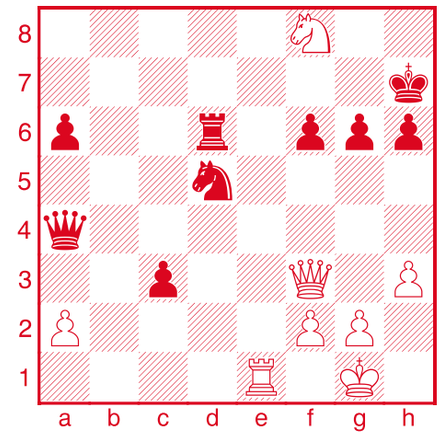
29.♘e2 is the best move, according to the computer. 29...♕c4 30.♘xc3!! ♕xc3 31.e7! ♕xf3 32.exd8♕+- a brilliant tactic, but seriously: who would've thought to retreat the knight in an ATTACKING position? #counterintuitive

29...♖xe7 30.♖xe7+ ♘xe7 31.♖e1



31...♘d5?
31...♘g8 is a much better move for Black 32.♘e6 threatening ♕b7 32...♖b8 *(32...♖e8 33.♕b7+ ♖e7 34.♘f8++-)* 33.♕xc3 ♖b7 34.♘c5 ♕c6± Still slightly more pleasant for White, but I would've lost all of my advantages.

32.♘e6 ♖d6 33.♘f8+

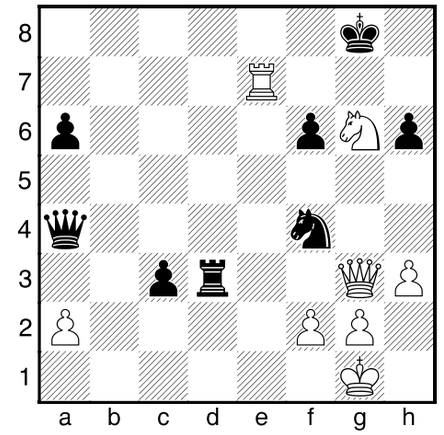


33...♔g7?
33...♔g8□ 34.♕g3 (♘xg6 transposes) 34...♖d8□ 35.♘xg6 ♔f7 36.♘h4 ♘e7 *(36...♖e8 37.♕g6+=)* 37.♕e3 ♖d7 38.g3 c2 39.♕xh6 ♕b4

editor − According to the computer, it's unbalanced but equal after 40.♕h5+ ♔g7 41.♖xe7+□ ♖xe7 42.♕g6+=.

34.♕g3 ♘f4 35.♘xg6 ♖d3 36.♖e7+
36.♕xf4 is also winning 36...♕xf4 37.♘xf4 ♖d2 38.♔f1 ♖xa2 39.♖c1 ♖a3 40.♘d5.

36...♔g8



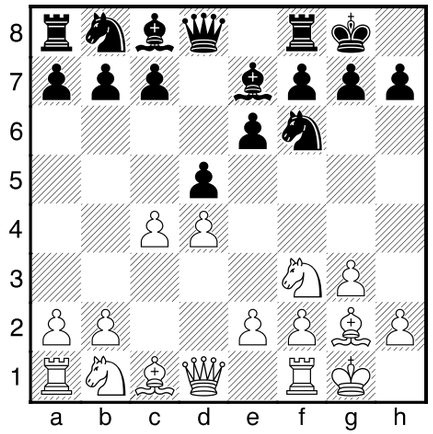
37.f3!
editor − 37.♕g4?? ♘xh3+-+, trades the ♕s and promotes.

37...♕d1+ 38.♔h2 ♘h5 39.♕g4 ♖d5 40.♕e6#
Overall, I was very happy with my play in this game. What an exciting one! The Canadian team went on to win the match against Slovenia 2.5 − 1.5!

1-0

Leonardi, Caterina (2024)
Ouellet, Maili−Jade (1992)
E17
Women's Olympiad Baku (7.4), 09.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 ♗e7 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0



6...b6

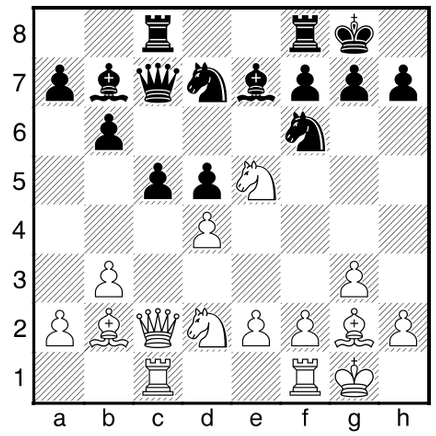
6...dxc4 7.♕c2 a6 is the start of the main−line in the open Catalan.

7.♕c2

White continues to play in Catalan style, ensuring the safety of the c4 pawn; but now that Black has played ...b6 White doesn't have to worry about getting the pawn back after ...dxc4 — since ♘e5 would be strong — so here ♘c3 is a more testing move.

7...♗b7 8.b3 c5 9.♗b2 ♕c7 10.♘bd2 ♘bd7 11.♖ac1

♖ac8 12.cxd5 exd5 13.♘e5



13...♘xe5!?

Not the safest move — ...♖fe8 or ...♕d6 — but definitely the most interesting, as the resulting pawn structure is very unbalanced. After the exchange on e5 the game follows its normal strategic course: Black pushes her queenside majority to create a passed pawn while White pushes her central majority to create attacking chances.

14.dxe5 ♘d7 15.f4

15.♘f3 ♕c6 and ...♕e6 to attack e5.

15...b5!

Black gets her queenside majority started. White has more than one reasonable way to play, and chooses to trade center pawns, giving her pieces the use of e4.

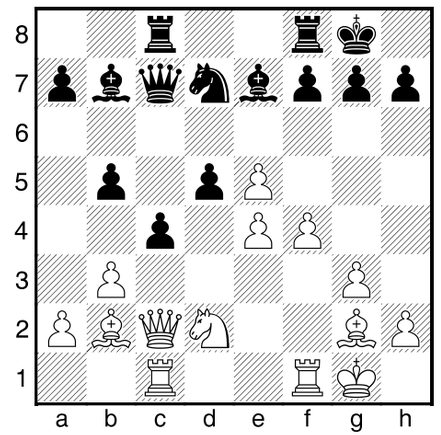
16.e4

16.♗h3!? hits d7 and c8, and gives White another way to undermine Black's pawns; e.g. e5-e6.

16.e3 and ♘f3 to restrain Black's center pawns also makes sense.

16...c4!

16...d4? 17.♗xd4±.



17.exd5

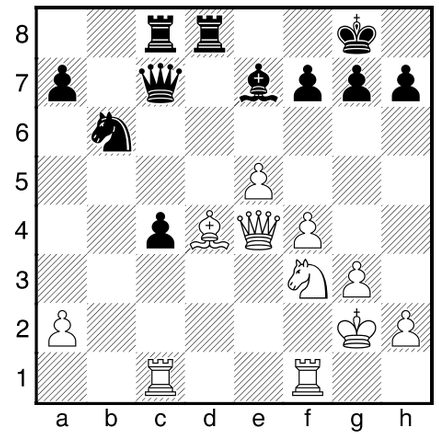
17.♖fd1?! ♘c5! 18.exd5 ♘d3 19.♕xd3 *(19.d6? ♕c5+* and there's a smothered mate.*)*

19...♗c5+ 20.♗d4! cxd3 21.♗xc5 ♖fd8 22.d6 ♕d7 23.♗xb7 ♕xb7 24.b4 Black is better, but it would be an interesting challenge to find a way to effectively open lines for her majors.

17...♗xd5 18.bxc4

18.♗xd5 ♕c5+ 19.♖f2 ♕xd5 20.bxc4 bxc4 21.♕e4 ♘b6∞ It's hard to tell if Black's passed pawn is strong or weak.

18...bxc4 19.♗d4 ♗xg2 20.♔xg2 ♘b6 21.♕e4 ♖fd8 22.♘f3



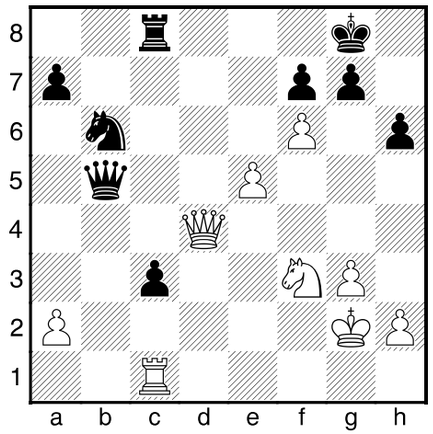
22...♗c5

22...♘d5!? 23.f5 *(23.♘g5!?)* 23...f6! *(23...♕c6!?)* Δ24.e6 c3 25.♖c2 ♕a5∓ threatening ...♕a4

and ...♖c4.

23.♖fd1 h6 24.f5 ♕c6 25.♕h4?!
25.♕xc6=.

25...♗xd4 26.♖xd4 ♖xd4 27.♕xd4 c3∓ 28.f6 ♕b5

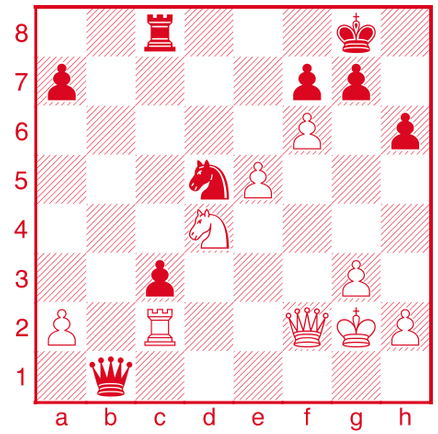


29.♖c2?
29.♖xc3?? ♕b2+-+.
⌓29.♕e4∓.

29...♕b1! 30.♕f2
30.♕e4 ♖c4! 31.♕d3 ♘d5! is similar to the game.

30...♘d5
Setting up tactics with ...♘e3+.

31.♘d4



What's better: ...♖c4 or ...♘b4

31...♖c4!
31...♘b4?? actually throws away all of Black's advantage as now White's f6-pawn and ♕ give enough play to draw, though the full line has to be seen to be believed: 32.♕f5□ ♖c7! 33.♕g4□ g6 34.♕f3= ♘xc2 35.♕a8+ ♔h7 36.♕f8 ♘e3+ 37.♔f3 ♕f5+!? *(37...♕f1+ 38.♔xe3 ♕g1+=)* 38.♘xf5?? *(38.♔e2□ ♕f1+ 39.♔xe3 ♕g1+=)* 38...♘xf5 39.♕d8 ♘d4+□ 40.♔e3 ♘e6-+ the ♘ defends everything and White's ♕ will be stuck doing blockade duty on c1.

32.e6
32.♘f5 defends e3, 32...gxf6 *(32...g6? 33.♘e7+□ ♘xe7 34.fxe7 ♕b7+ 35.♕f3 ♕xe7 36.♖xc3∓)* 33.exf6 ♔h7!-+ and White has no tactics and no defence to ...♖c6xf6 or ...♘b4.

32...♖xd4! 33.exf7+
33.fxg7 f6!-+ and White has no more tricks.

33...♔xf7
33...♔f8?? 34.fxg7++-.

34.fxg7+ ♘f4+!
34...♘f4+! 35.gxf4 *(35.♔f3 ♕b7+* is mating.*)* 35...♕xc2 36.♕xc2 ♖d2+-+.

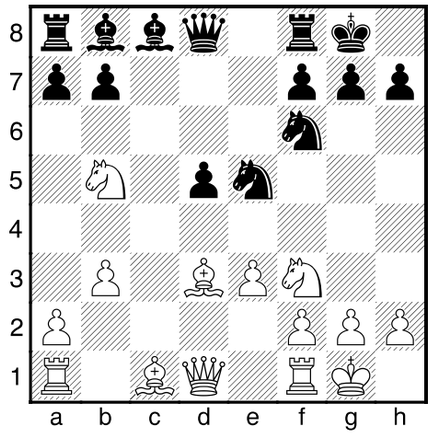
0-1

Maili-Jade Ouellet

Black makes a couple of indifferent moves in an IQP position and White finishes her off with a crisp combo.

Botez, Alexandra (2092)
Laubscher, Anzel (1814)
D46
Women's Olympiad Baku (11.2), 13.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♗d3 ♗d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.b3 e5 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.♘b5 ♗b8 11.dxe5 ♘xe5



12.h3N
12.♗e2 is more common, keeping the ♗ and getting ready for a standard IQP middlegame.

With 12.h3 White avoids a classic trap (which I've seen more often with colours reversed): ***12.♗b2 ♘xf3+:***

13.♕xf3?? 13...♗g4 14.♗xf6 ♕d7! 15.♗f5 ♗xf5 The ♗f6 is hanging, and Black threatens ...♗g4 (again) trapping the ♕. 16.♖fd1 ♗g4 17.♖xd5 ♗xf3 18.♖xd7 ♗c6 0-1 Mikhalevski,V − Motylev,A Minsk (rapid), 2015.

⌓13.gxf3 ♗h3 14.♖e1 ♘e4!↑ 15.f4 ♕h4! 16.♕f3 ♘d2! *(≤16...♖d8 17.♖ed1 ♗g4 18.♕g2 ♘g5∞ Polugaevsky,L − Kaidanov,G Groningen, 1993.)* Δ17.♕e2 ♗xf4!! 18.exf4 ♖ae8 19.♗e5 ♖xe5-+.

12...♘e4 13.♗b2 ♕f6?!

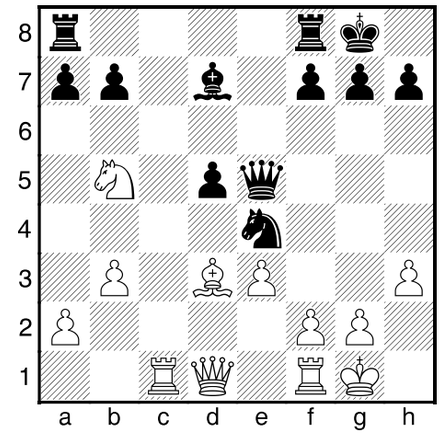
Before Rd 11. *Good try, but Fabi still beat the Canadian.*

The piece exchanges and exposed ♕ don't help Black.

13...♘xd3 14.♕xd3 ♗e6±.

13...♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3 a6 *(14...♘d2? 15.♕h5!→)* 15.♘c3±.

14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.♗xe5 ♕xe5 16.♖c1 ♗d7?

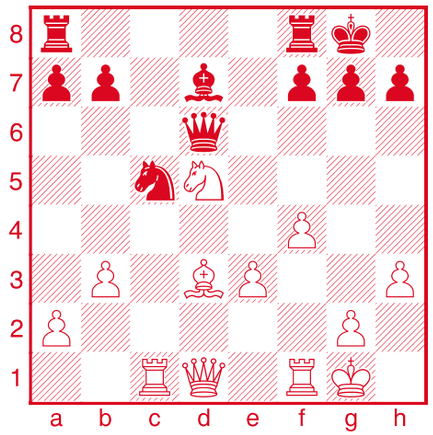


17.f4!
There are no good squares for the black ♕.

17...♕e7
17...♕b8? 18.♘c7+-.
17...♕b2 18.♘c7 ♖ad8 19.♘xd5±.
17...♕f5 18.♘d6!? *(18.♘c7 ♖ad8 19.g4 ♕g6 20.♘xd5 ♕e6±* Black

might get some play against the White kingside.) 18...♕g6 19.♗xe4 dxe4 20.f5±.

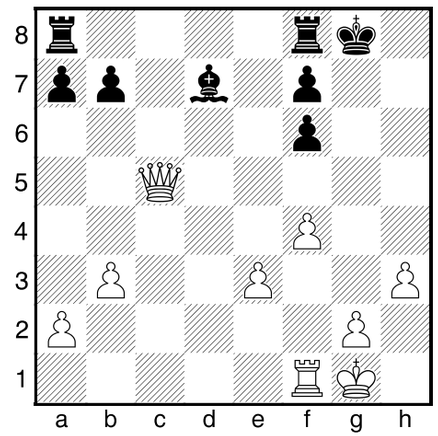
18.♘c7 ♘c5 19.♘xd5 ♕d6



20.♖xc5!!
Alexandra took under 2 minutes for this move.

20...♕xc5
20...♗e6 21.♘f6+ gxf6 22.♗xh7+ also wins the ♕.

21.♗xh7+ ♔xh7
22.♕h5+ ♔g8
23.♘f6+ gxf6
24.♕xc5



White is completely winning, but it's a team event, so Black struggled on.

24...♗c6 25.♕f5 ♔g7
26.♕g4+ ♔h7 27.♕f5+ ♔g7
28.e4 ♖ad8 29.♖f3 ♖d1+
30.♔h2 ♖fd8 31.♖g3+ ♔f8
32.♕c5+ ♔e8 33.♖g8+ ♔d7
34.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 35.h4 ♔c7
36.h5 ♖d8 37.♕e7+ ♖d7
38.♕xf6 ♔c8 39.♕f5

1-0

links

Canadian Women's Results
http://chess-results.com/tnr232876.aspx?lan=1&art=20&fed=CAN&flag=30&wi=821

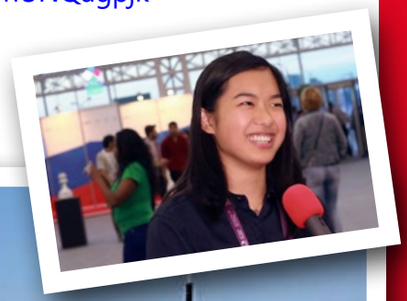
photo/video

google page photos
https://plus.google.com/photos/109802875639835440521/albums/6329649545002102065

Danny King Inteviews:

... Yuanling Yuan
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuIOa2lGNOM&t=2s

... Qiyu Zhou
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOnUNQagpjk



Arbiter in the Land of Fire

by IA Aris Marghetis

Day 0
August 31
Departure

As an International Arbiter based in Canada, one thing you get used to is that when you're invited to a remote (relative to Ottawa) part of the world, you're not going to have an optimal amount of money to work with in planning your travel. FIDE and the Organizers do give you funding, which increases the further away you are from the location, but it rarely increases as sharply as the prices of flights increase when one has to vault over an ocean.

This led me to an overall plan that echoed what I did for Norway in 2014. I drove to JFK airport in New York City, for a direct flight to Baku, Azerbaijan. Due to various commitments, I didn't start driving until after sunset on August 31st, such that I drove through the night, right into the JFK parking lot as the sun was coming up. There was something "urban beautiful" about driving through Times Square before dawn, and I strangely recommend making it a bucket list activity!

Day 1
September 1
Arrival

This was the official Arrival Day for the Olympiad, but given my special direct flight plans, I was able to fly out from North America on this day, and arrive the next day *before* any Arbiter activities were scheduled.

I flew the flagship Azerbaijan Airlines direct flight from New York to Baku, which was easily **the most luxurious flight OF MY LIFE!** We were served seven times!

It is true that the temperature in Baku, at least at that time of year, is always the same, day or night, in the mid-twenties. For some reason, it doesn't really heat up in the day, nor cool down at night.

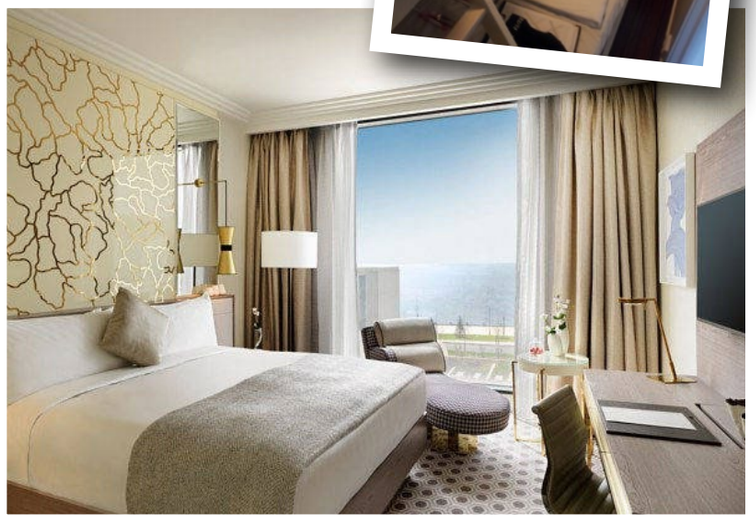
Another cool climate feature of Baku is continuous fresh winds. They were not too strong, but when they lapsed, the smell of oil in the air was so pervasive that you could sometimes smell-taste the oil in your mouth. As our mini-bus drove, you could periodically see tall flames in the sky from oil equipment. The locals call this area The Land of Fire!

There is *a lot* of oil money in Baku, translating into a *lot* of people working *a lot*. For example, there are "manual" cleaners everywhere, even on the highways, even overnight.

I found the various local architectures rather pleasing to the eye, a successful blend of historical-

traditional and hyper-modern. One interesting common element is that much of the supporting structures, including marble, were of a unique sandy-yellow colour, reflecting local mineralization.

The Boulevard Hotel, along with accommodating some teams, was the "arbiter hotel". I can honestly say this hotel was **the most luxurious OF MY LIFE!** My room seemed to be one of the best available, and reminded me — *in not one way* — of where we stayed in Norway in 2014.



Words cannot do justice to how well we were treated as valued guests!

Day 2
September 2
Round 1

After days of travel, we finally get going! Security is everywhere, and the arbiters benefit from a police escort to the Crystal Hall, for the Arbiters' Meeting at 10am. There are even fully-armed soldiers during our route, especially on this first day. Baku traffic is not brutal, but every day these police escorts will save all participants a significant amount of time. One strange security measure is that everyone is scanned before the place where electronics are checked in. With the worldwide general obsession with taking photos, this sequence will come back to haunt us. Although we never caught anyone cheating in my section, the infestation of little cameras was exasperating!

The **Arbiters' Meeting** was well conducted, with **Chief Arbiter Faik Gasanov** (multiple spellings, AZE) speaking only in Russian,

with translations into English. Practically all communications during this Olympiad will be in only Russian and English. Virtually no visitors to Azerbaijan could speak Azeri, a language very specific to this country. However, I did make use of Turkish friends I made in Istanbul in 2012, as they could help me with Azeri, a Turkic tongue.

Tournament Director Takis Nikolopoulos (GRE) does a great job, as usual. **I am grateful to be assigned to Sector 1, which includes Boards 1-10 of the Open Section**. I have been blessed to watch the best chess players on the planet!

After the meeting, the arbiters swarm into the playing area, to finalize preparations for the players, who begin play in a few hours. I am especially impressed with the top boards having special playing tables, with a divider underneath, shelves for drinks, etc. The rest of the playing tables have nice tight covers, significantly avoiding annoying shifting tablecloths.

Then out of nowhere, a very personal issue! My gastro-intestinal region is uncomfortable. I suddenly recall that during the 11-hour flight, I never attended a restroom. I felt lucky at the time, but I don't feel so lucky now. Within minutes that felt like many *more* minutes, the discomfort turns to pain, then vicious pain. My body tries to persevere, but there's no hope. A VIP driver rushes me to the hotel, where I sleep for *fifteen hours* straight, missing Round 1 completely.

On the positive side, this gives me time to set up the room that will be used for the **FA Arbiter's Seminar** starting the next day, and on my very first night in Baku, I get to see their astonishingly **magnificent nighttime skyline**!

Day 3 September 3 Round 2

I awaken wonderfully refreshed at 3am local time. I guess the time zone adjustment thing will take some, well, time. Given my superb room view, I get to watch dawn over the Caspian Sea, which is bigger than many countries. Although landlocked, as it is salt water, it is a sea rather than a lake. The many oil tankers remind me of the Bosphorus in Turkey, the critical waterway strait between Europe and Asia. For the first time, I also notice the wonderfully crafted "back yard" of the hotel, leading down to the Caspian. I also notice the occasional midsize feral dog!

I start my official work day as **Assistant Lecturer at the FA Arbiters' Seminar**, at the arbiter hotel. There's a noticeable lack of garbage receptacles throughout this trip, which is a common security measure. The conference room for the seminar is accessed via a lobby that doubles as access to wedding receptions. The hotel staff insist that I am welcome to drop in on any of the weddings there! After the habitually heavy heat of August, they run weddings on a daily basis in September. Back to the seminar, everything is very comfortable, and the staff is genuinely very helpful, solving any issues promptly.

For my match, I am on **Board 8, for Ireland-France**. Everything starts on time, all logistics are well organized with very many bodies in play. I especially notice the security staff demonstrating special politeness towards women, like never walking right in front of them, but rather detouring out of their personal space. There's great physical spacing between matches, and these are the best scoresheets, scorepads, and timesheets that I have ever worked with. This is already my favourite Olympiad! My actual match is uneventful, with three Irish players getting into ferocious time trouble, all leading to losses en route to a 0.5-3.5 loss as a team. Both teams are personable, making for a very pleasant round.

Veselin Topalov... has many questions about Vancouver, and what the market for chess lessons is like there.

On the return bus to the hotel, I have a special conversation with Bulgaria's Veselin Topalov. To my amazement, he has many questions about Vancouver, and what the market for chess lessons is like there. So, to be clear here: if Veselin moves to Vancouver, and especially if he switches to Team Canada — he did NOT say that — I expect FULL CREDIT!

To end the day, I take my first walk along the spectacular boardwalk between the hotel and the Caspian, encircling the Baku harbour for miles. Even though it is quite dark and ominous, I find myself strangely drawn to the end of the longest marble pier. It reminds me of the big pier at La Roche Perce near Gaspe, Quebec, which I visited pre-dawn a couple of years ago. There's that same sensation of unimaginable power flowing just below, and then a big feral dog scares me!

Day 4 September 4 Round 3

My day again starts with the FA Arbiters' Seminar. Given the relative inexperience of some of the attendees, we are already falling behind schedule. My Sector Arbiter is also feeling sick all the time, and I decide to strictly continue with the BRAT diet. This will continue until I land back in North America. Even in the midst of virtually continuous scrumptious buffets, I will lose five pounds. It staggers what a good gastro-intestinal mess can do.

My match is **Board 5, Netherlands-Vietnam,** which finishes 2.5-1.5 relatively smoothly. But

the added bonus of the day for me, is that **Canada is right beside me on Board 7**. I'm not allowed to cover for their arbiter, if, for example, he has to go to the restroom, but I get to really soak in their games.

One thing that is very obvious all of the time, is the passionate engagement of our Captain, Victor Plotkin. This is in huge contrast to many other national captains, some of whom sit around reading general magazines, or who even depart without ever returning that round.

During the round, I was also pleasantly surprised by our FIDE Rep Hal Bond, who slipped me Victor's new FIDE Trainer card, which I slipped to Victor. With different hotels and all kinds of security measures, there are disappointingly few opportunities to socialize with people like Hal, staying at other hotels. So it's good fun to spend a few minutes together!

After the round, after Alexandre had lost, he was whisked away for a random anti-cheating check. When he emerged, we both had a good chuckle, talking in nostalgically fun Montreal joual, that they should have been checking the winner?!

As I approach the return bus to the hotel, I recall that the previous evening, a man approaching the bus tripped on the sidewalk, and stumbled into the bus. He was out of my sightlines at moment of impact, but I had feared that the collision had been headlong. When I asked him if he was OK though, he brushed it off. Well now I see him again, and he has a huge bandage in the middle of his forehead. It had all unfolded in an unpredictable instant, and I start wondering what kind of coverage Blue Cross can ensure for me here? We don't even have an embassy in Azerbaijan. The Government of Canada website actually refers you to Ankara, Turkey. Wonderful. That's 1900 km around Armenia and through Georgia. I step carefully.

Round 3:

Vietnam *vs* **Netherlands**
Canada *vs* **England**
IA Aris Marghetis

Day 5 September 5 Round 4

After FA Arbiters' Seminar in the morning, it turns into a deeply enjoyable day for me, as my match is **Board 9, Greece-France,** 2-2. Most of the games are very entertaining, and I get to spend the rest of that day and evening talking my first and third languages, Greek and French. It felt like a fun family reunion!

Other highlights included seeing very many old chess friends who were arriving for commission meetings, the Congress, etc. I also started really earnestly playing WWTGMM (what will the Grandmaster move), where in my head I am trying to predict the next move in each of my four games. Whereas I am only a mediocre chess player, it was still cheerfully amusing just how often I was incorrect, and just how often I had no idea why a player had made a particular move!

Day 6 September 6 Round 5

No FA Arbiters' Seminar this morning, but instead the meeting of the FIDE Arbiters' Commission, of which I am the Secretary. Then my match was supposed to have been **Board 1, Ukraine-China**, but I was pulled away to attend the meeting of the FIDE Rules Commission, which entailed very interesting discussions!

Day 7 September 7 no round

An all-day FA Arbiters' Seminar includes my first genuine lunch-time break of the whole trip.

I can still clearly remember the brilliantly sunny **warmly windy outdoor patio overlooking the Caspian**. Followed by a nice daytime walk eastward until the White City construction zone. One of the mottos here is "from Black Gold to the White City", which is a glorious rebuild after decades and decades of accumulated oil pollution. The sea water looks very oily, and frankly, very dead. But then there's local men fishing in it! However, they must be too close to the hotel, because shortly a security guard confronts them to move along. I walk back with a young couple (both players) from Lesotho (South Africa), who tell me that they feel bad for us in Canada because it so hot this summer!

Baku: from Black Gold to the White City

Day 8 September 8 Round 6

At the end of the day, I am delighted to go for another walk, this time westward along the **White City Boulevard boardwalk**, almost 3km each way. It is very safe and convenient for pedestrians thanks to underground crosswalks, and the presence of many "civic sentinels". I made up that term, as they are not policemen, but are clearly there to ensure no problems could even possibly brew. As per Wiki-Travel, it is culturally inappropriate around here to make eye contact with strangers, which makes it difficult to start friendly chats. I finally succeed at a soccer and basketball park area!

A few months ago, I had needed assistance rebuilding some chess diagrams for a rules proposal that I was preparing. At the time, our resourceful John Upper had helped me out, leaving me with some tools that I could use later. Well they came in very handy today, as I used them to rebuild diagrams needed for the test for the FA Arbiters' Seminar, which were corrupted due to local unavailability of certain chess software. Thanks John!

After the day off yesterday, there is a strong refreshed energy in the playing hall today. My match is **Board 6, Germany-Russia**, 1-3. This is my first time really getting to witness the **Filatov-Kramnik effect**. They are both very intriguing men, in very dif-

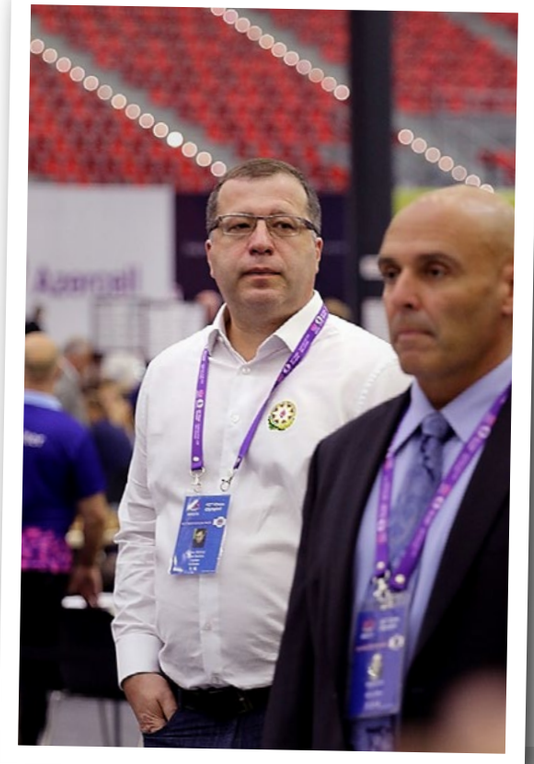
ferent ways. From a chess spectator viewpoint, it was incredible watching Kramnik, allowing a pawn fork of two minors, going into a deep think with his forehead on crossed arms on the table, coming up with an extended combo that eventually reduced into a winning endgame. Phenomenally impressive stuff!

Canada is right beside us on Board 5, which is also right beside the bleachers, and wins to be tied for 3rd place!

Day 9
September 9
Round 7

The last day of the FA Arbiters' Seminar before their exam, now a day later than originally scheduled. **There is an awkwardness when a teaching example is posted on the projector, including the line: "player from Armenia"**. For most of the world, that is completely inconsequential, but in Azerbaijan, there are incredibly strict laws regarding any reference to anything Armenian. Note that Armenia did not even participate in this Olympiad.

After arbiter group photos, I make special preparations for my match on **Board 4, Croatia-Azerbaijan**, as the press coverage for the local national team is unprecedented. The final score is a relatively predictable 0.5-3.5 but it fascinates me that **the losing Croatians seem to be generally happier than the winning Azeris**. The Croatians almost never leave their games, seemingly fascinated with them, while the Azeris arise repeatedly, seemingly in anxiety. For the last game of the match, there is a separate TV camera dedicated fulltime to each player. Even after the match ends, and I am just posting the results, there are two TV cameras filming me do that from different angles. Pressure!



Chess, like love and music, has the power to make men unhappy.
Aleksey Dreev, Captain of the Azeri team, tense even while winning.

In a completely separate incident, in the middle of the round many of us were moved by the sight of the Turkish captain, stumbling by, ***literally weeping into his hands***. One of his players had missed a winning middlegame tactic.

As I drift back to the hotel, I think about how serious this Olympiad is for many countries. Lives are being changed.

Day 10
September 10
Round 8

After the uneventful FA Arbiters' Seminar exam, I receive probably **my highest profile assignment ever: Board 1, Russia-USA!** The press coverage is like nothing I have ever felt before, and the resulting pictures are a testament to that. The round finally starts, and the fun really begins.

Officially, just over a dozen photographers received authorization to work the top boards. However, as the rounds progressed, and especially for the big Russia-USA match, there were many people with non-professional cameras, who had somehow slipped past security.

I find out later that the upper arbiters had (correctly) predicted an insane amount of traffic around this match. I had not expected to be assigned this match, as Canada is a very close neighbour of the USA, but the overriding criteria was deemed to be to **assign an arbiter willing to quietly confront a slew of people into giving the players their space. Repeatedly. For hours. And hours.**

"The Bodyguard" on Board 1

It is exhausting, but I remember it as exhilarating! Other arbiters give me the nickname "The Bodyguard".

I will *never* understand it when high-level chess players, and former high-level chess players, physically approach ongoing games intrusively. That makes my blood boil! To add to the excitement, for some unfathomable reason, **Alexander Grischuk**, who is playing Ray Robson on board 4, goes *behind* the American team *four times*. Everyone knows this is illegal, and his captain Andrey backs me up 100%

The match ended 2-2. As it was impossible for my attention to stray away for even a few seconds, I would like to take a moment here to thank Open Captain Victor for periodically providing me with Team Canada updates, and to Women's Captain Aman for providing me cans of Tranquini, a super energy drink available onsite in only limited quantities. Thanks guys!

Day 11 September 11 Round 9

For the first day since arriving in Azerbaijan, I get to sleep in! I am deliriously happy about this, and plan a run of approximately 6km. It seems like a pretty good idea, until I cross a small pack of feral dogs. And then another one. They seem to be moving into position, like a nature show on timber wolves, to intercept me. Objectively speaking, that fear is unreasonable, but I change my running route on the fly, shortening it. In addition to the feral dogs, there's something different about the alleged birds here. Back home, when I run towards a flock of birds, they will scatter. But here, they look like crosses between crows and badgers, so *I* run around *them*!

There is absolutely no local mention of 9/11. North Americans, and some Western Europeans speak of it, but that's all.

My match today is **Board 1, Ukraine-India**. The first three games are all draws, and before Ukraine wins the deciding last game, I get pulled away for a special disciplinary meeting regarding an Americas conflict. I prefer chess!

After days of mocking by Aman and Eric, I finally hit the hotel gym, mentally converting pounds-kilograms many times. Back to my room, I turn on the TV, go take a shower, and there's a TV speaker in the bathroom! **Best. Hotel. Ever.**

Day 12 September 12 Round 10

My match is **Board 3, India-Russia**, 2-2. The Indian team arrives much earlier, and we have a most pleasant chat before the round [photo previous page].

During the round, the Indian players seem to be at their games more often than the Russians, and incredibly, Grischuk goes behind the Indian team *three times*. That is an improvement from Round 8. Regardless, I am fortunate to be right beside Canada-Latvia on Board 5, again right beside Canadian chess history in the making. Unfortunately, I don't get to immerse myself into it, even after my match has concluded. My Deputy Chief Arbiter informs me that my Sector Arbiter is so sick that he was returned to the hotel, and he offered me to take over for the rest of the evening, which also included the top 6 boards in the Women's section.

This development caused me to depart from the playing hall much later than usual. Therefore, it was much darker during the return bus to the hotel, and I couldn't help but notice the widespread darkened buildings. In other words, there very well might be huge vacancy rate in Baku, which has relatively recently seen enormous amounts of construction funded by oil.

Day 13 September 13 Round 11

My last match is perfectly placed: I have direct view to Board 1 Canada-USA, to Board 2 Slovenia-Ukraine, and to Board 3 Italy-Russia. My mind knows that it is unlikely that Canada will have a miracle medal finish, but my heart is ready for it! My own match is **Board 4, Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan**, 1-3. In all my years as International Arbiter, this is my first time meeting Turkmenistan, and I am astonished that their team captain is the father of their first three players. And he has a daughter on their women's team. I wonder what that family does for fun?!

From the viewpoint of Team Canada, the very last Olympiad game is Eric Hansen winning as White. This is a fitting tribute to the extraordinarily successful team strategy implemented by Victor, and the whole team banding together to make it happen!

After my last match ended, it was awesome to chat with Hal and Vlad Drkulec, a timeless sharing

of how we felt about what Team Canada had just achieved. But then on the return bus to the hotel, I guess my body figured I was all done, and it went quite sick quite fast. Even that wasn't all bad: Vlad needed a closing ceremony ticket, so I gave him mine.

Day 14
September 14
Departure Day

Normally after such big chess events, especially when flying internationally westward, there's often an exhausting rush to a departure sequence that can get somewhat extensive. However, this time, I am leaving very early *the next day*. This rests me, as I recover in my sweet room *all day long*.

I finally leave my room for the gym, just before sunset, and for the first time, through the huge gym windows, I appreciate the timeless beauty of the sun setting over the Caspian Sea. Symbolically announcing the end of the trip, the sky actually appears darker than usual, overwhelmed with a pure white almost full "super harvest" moon.

Memory of a lifetime.

Day 15
September 15
extra day for Aris to get home

The final plan comes together. I don't bother going to sleep, as I would have to be ready at 2am for my 5am flight, and I *want* to sleep on the plane, hopefully facilitating my return to the Eastern time zone. The plan seems to be going well. Checkout is easy. Airport bus is smooth. It seems all of Baku is lit up most beautifully. The airport is opulent. Yes, the plan seems to be going perfectly... then airport security get its hands on me.

the plan seems to be going perfectly... then airport security gets its hands on me.

In the space of less than one hour, I have to proceed through *three* detection stations, I am *very* thoroughly physically investigated twice, with good old fashioned manual checking. I don't mind, better safe than sorry. However, I must admit, when they then asked me to remove all clothes from my upper body for yet *another* manual checking, I start worrying!

The 12-hour direct flight from Baku to New York went well. We left in darkness, arcing over the top of the world, but in the general direction opposite the planet's rotation, so the sun caught up. I landed in sunny United States of America, 2016 Olympiad champions. Finally, I drove straight home to Ottawa. I love driving. Just say no to driverless cars!

- Aris Marghetis

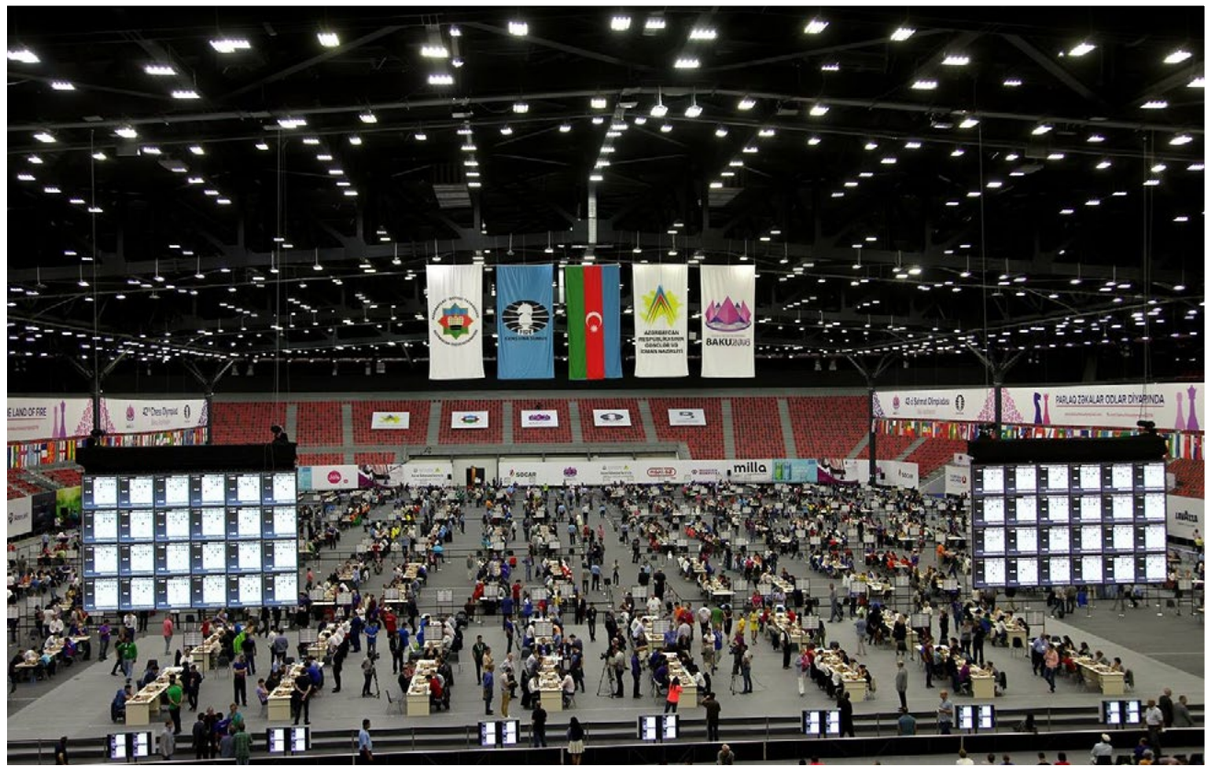
Strategy
GAMES AND ACCESSORIES

Around the Hall

Of course, Canadians weren't the only ones playing in Baku :-)

Here are seven highlights from Around the Hall:

1. Torre's ageless play
2. Jobava's Gold Medal Attack
3. Kramnik: KID Killer
4. Raggar's KID Attack
5. Caruana's Close Call
6. China vs Russia for Gold
7. Unofficial Gold Medal Game



One for the ages

One of the big stories of the Baku Olympiad was the play of 64-year-old Philippine GM **Eugenio Torre**. It is not simply that he played in his record 23rd Olympiad, *he crushed it*:

- played every round,
- scored +9 =2 -0,
- board 3 bronze medal,
- huge TPR of 2813!

I don't know, but suspect this is the highest performance ever achieved by anyone over the age of 60... possibly of any over 50!

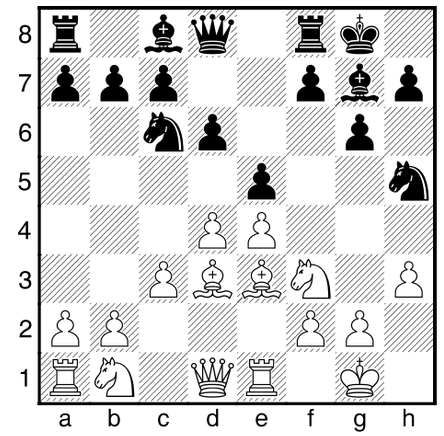
The following game was not Torre's biggest win of the Olympiad. That was his round 7 win over Spanish GM Ivan Salgado Lopez (2662). It's complicated, but it's hardly a fan-friendly attacking miniature. I picked this game because combines all the things that made Torre's 2016 Olympiad so remarkable:

- Torre played every game at the Baku Olympiad, and this was his 11th game;
- This was the last round, so fatigue should (?) be an issue;
- Torre was 40 years older than his opponent, who was born in 1991;
- Torre's opponent out-rated him by 76 points;
- it's very sharp, and long, and Torre won.

Torre, Eugenio (2447)
Ly, Moulthun (2513)
B07
42nd Olympiad Baku (11.3), 13.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6
Still learning...!?
Torre has had this position as White 15 times in his career, first in 1973, but he has never played the following move.

4.♗d3 ♘f6 5.0-0 0-0 6.h3 ♘c6 7.c3 e5 8.♖e1 ♘h5 9.♗e3



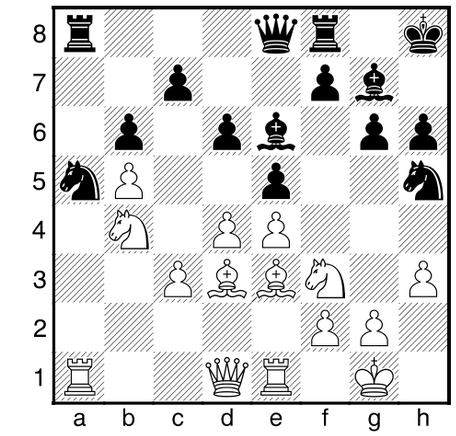
9...h6
9...d5?! 10.♗g5 f6 11.exd5

♕xd5 *(11...fxg5 12.dxc6 exd4 13.♕b3+ ♔h8 14.cxb7 ♗xb7 15.♕xb7 dxc3 16.♘xc3! ♕xd3 17.♖ad1± ♕f5 18.♕xc7 g4 19.hxg4 ♕xg4 20.♕d7± (1-0, 79)* Beliavsky,A−Azmaiparashvili,Z Portoroz, 1997*)* 12.♘bd2 ♔h8 13.♗e3 exd4 14.♗c4± (½-½, 74) Watanabe,A (2358) − Berry,J (2269) Carlos Torre Memorial, 2003.

10.♘a3 a6

10...♗d7 11.♔h2 ♘f4 12.♗f1 g5 13.♘c4 f5 14.♗xf4 exf4 15.exf5 d5 16.♘ce5 ♗xf5 17.♗d3 ♕d6 18.♕b3 ♗xd3 19.♘xd3 b6 20.♔g1± Black would perfer to have his pawns on f7 and g6. Smirin,I (2640)−Nijboer,F (2555) Tilburg, 1993 (1-0, 58).

11.♘c2 b6 12.a4 ♕e8 13.b4 ♔h8 14.b5 axb5 15.axb5 ♘a5 16.♘b4 ♗e6

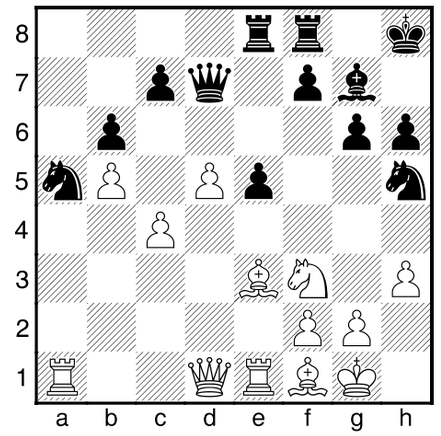


White has more space and Black's ♘'s are not great.

17.dxe5

Another way to play is to keep the position closed with: 17.d5 ♗d7 18.c4 ♘f4 19.♘a6± *or 19.♗f1±.*

17...dxe5 18.♘d5 ♗xd5 19.exd5 ♕d7 20.c4 ♖ae8 21.♗f1



White is threatening c4-c5 with queenside pressure and a passed d−pawn. Pushing his kingside pawns looks like the only way to create any counterplay for Black, but Torre exploits the weakened squares very skillfully.

21...f5

21...♘b7 22.♖a7 ♘c5 23.♗xc5 bxc5 24.♘d2 and ♘e4 or ♘b3 will leave Black straining to defend the c5-pawn.

22.♗c1 e4?!

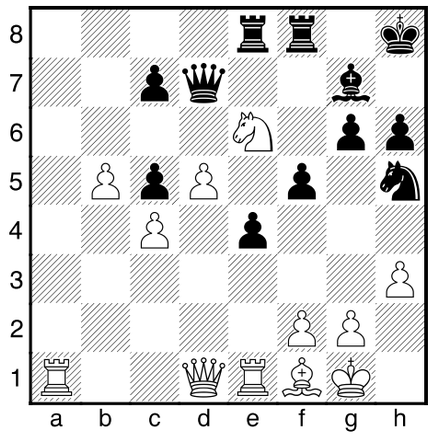
Conceding the d4-square isn't something Black wants to do, but it's hard to suggest what to do. Regrouping the ♘a5 looks reasonable: 22...♘b7 23.♖a7 ♘c5 24.♘h4 Remakably, all

It's not easy... today I mostly play with my grandchildren.

- Eugenio Torre

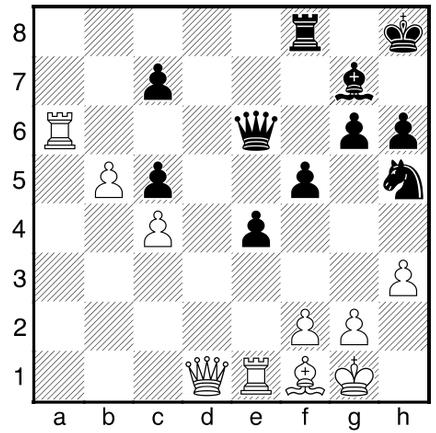
of White's pieces are on the edge of the board, but they're all doing something useful. 24...♔h7 25.♗e3! Defends f3 and threatens ♘xf5!. 25...♘f6 *(25...f4?? 26.♗xc5 bxc5 27.♗d3+-)* 26.♗xc5 bxc5 27.b6±.

23.♘d4 ♘b7 24.♗a3 ♘c5 25.♗xc5 bxc5 26.♘e6



26...♖xe6!
26...♗xa1 gives White the option of regaining the exchange on f8 or sac−ing the exchange with ♕xa1 then ♘xc5, with advantage either way.

27.dxe6 ♕xe6 28.♖a6!



28...♕e7
Black gives the g6-pawn for piece activity.

28...♕e8 saves the g6 pawn, but does not solve all the problems. Not because of 29.♖c6?, which is too soon: 29...♗d4! 30.♕c1 f4 31.♗d3 ♘g3!∞.

Instead, after ***28...♕e8*** White can target other weaknesses after ***29.♕c1!*** attacking the c1-h6 diagonal keeps Black's ♗ off d4 and ♘ off f4:

29...f4? 30.♗d3!+-;

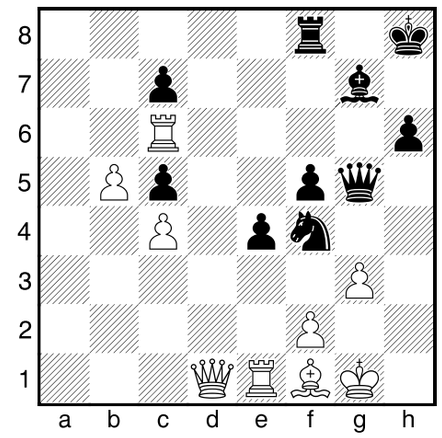
29...♔h7 30.♗e2 ♘f6 31.♖c6±;

29...♘f6 30.♕e3 ♘d7 31.♖c6±;

29...g5 30.♖c6 Black can hope for something with ...♗g4, but White can give back an exchange to eliminate Black's ♗.

29.♖xg6 ♘f4 30.♖c6 ♕g5 31.h4!?
31.♖e3! protects the 3rd rank and kills Black's threats.

31...♕xh4 32.g3 ♕g5



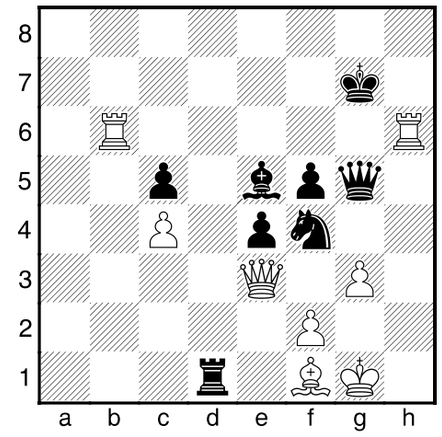
The players were probably in time pressure here, but Torre plays the next few tricky moves accurately.

33.♕c1! ♗e5 34.♕e3! ♖d8
34...♖g8 35.♖xc5+-.

35.♖b1!
Preparing to create another open file for his extra ♖.

35...♖d2 36.b6!
36.♕xd2?? ♘h3+ 37.♗xh3 ♕xd2∓.

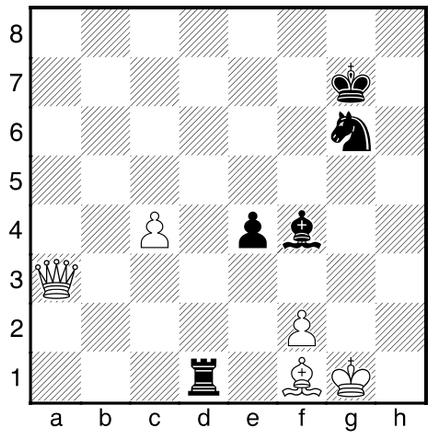
36...cxb6 37.♖bxb6 ♖d1 38.♖xh6+ ♔g7



39.♖bg6+?!
⌓39.♕xc5 and White wins with an attack:
39...♗d4 40.♕c7+□ is mating.
39...♘e2+ 40.♔g2 ♘f4+ 41.♔h2□+-.

39...♕xg6□ 40.♖xg6+ ♘xg6 41.♕xc5 f4!
Trades a potential target pawn and exposes both ♔s.

42.gxf4 ♗xf4 43.♕a3



43...♘e5

43...♖c1? drops the e−pawn: 44.♕b2+ ♘e5 *(44...♔h6 45.♕e2+-)* 45.♕b7+ ♔f6 46.♕xe4+-.

44.♔g2

Natural, but this doesn't help.

44.c5? ♘f3+□ 45.♔g2 ♖d5□ 46.c6?? loses to a long string of only moves: *(46.♕a7+=)* 46...♖g5+ 47.♔h3 ♖h5+ 48.♔g4 ♖h4+ 49.♔f5 ♘d4+ 50.♔xe4 ♗d6+ 51.♔d5 ♗xa3 52.c7 ♘f5!-+ *(52...♖h8?? 53.♗h3=).*

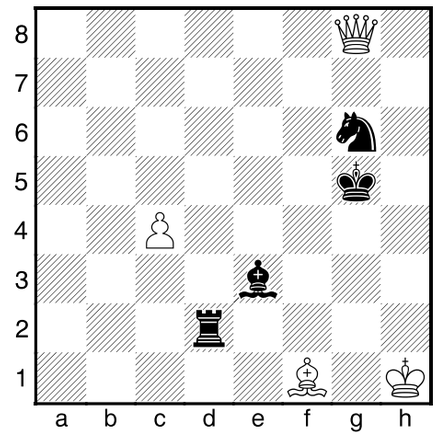
44...♖d2!

Threatening ...e3.

45.♕e7+ ♔g6 46.♕e8+! ♔g5 47.♕g8+! ♘g6

47...♔f6 48.♕f8+ ♔g5 49.♕g7+ ♔f5 50.♕h7+ ♘g6 51.♕h5+ ♔f6 52.♔g1.

48.♔g1 e3 49.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 50.♔h1



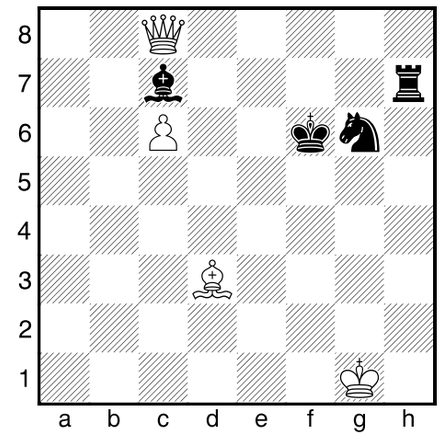
White is better, but this is an exhausting nightmare of almost 100% calculation. And remember: White is 64-years−old, and this is his 11th game of the Olympiad....

50...♗f4?

... but his 25-year−old opponent cracks first!

50...♖c2?? 51.♗d3+-; ***50...♖d1!*** 51.♔g2 ♖d2+ 52.♔f3 ♗g1 and the ♗ does double duty, attacking the ♔ and controlling the c−pawn.

51.c5 ♔f6 52.c6 ♗c7 53.♕c8 ♖h2+ 54.♔g1 ♖h7 55.♗d3



55...♗b6+

55...♖g7 56.♕f5+ ♔e7 57.♕g5+ ♔f7 58.♗c4+ ♔e8 59.♔f1! ♗e5 60.c7!! ♗xc7 61.♕f6 ♗e5 62.♗b5++-.

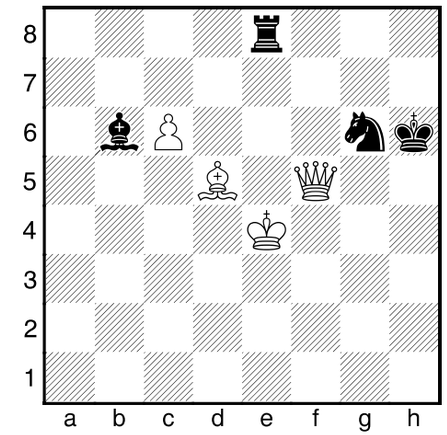
56.♔f1 ♖f7

Now ♕f5+ self−skewers after ...♔g7.

57.♗c4 ♖f8 58.♕e6+ ♔g5+ 59.♔e1□ ♖d8 60.♕f7 ♗a5+ 61.♔e2□

61.♔f2?? ♖f8=.

61...♘f4+ 62.♔f3 ♘g6 63.♔e4 ♗b6 64.♕f5+ ♔h6 65.♗d5 ♖e8+



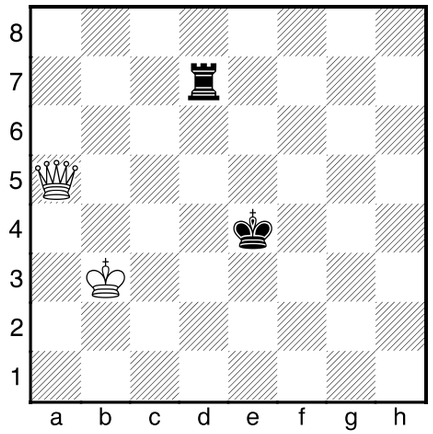
White has made a lot of progress: his pawn is only one dark square from promotion and his ♔ is out of the box and Black's pieces are losing their coordination.

66.♗e6□

66.♔d3? ♖e5□=.

66...♗c7 67.♔d4 ♖d8+ 68.♔c3 ♖d6 69.♗d7 ♘e5 70.♕f8+ ♔g5 71.♕c8 ♗a5+ 72.♔b3 ♖d3+ 73.♔a4 ♗d2 74.♕e8 ♔f4 75.♕e6 ♖d4+ 76.♔b3 ♘xd7 77.cxd7 ♗a5 78.♕f6+ ♔e4 79.♕a6 ♖d5

80.♕xa5! ♖xd7



It's a book win, but it's harder to win than most players think. One useful heuristic when the ♖ is separated from the ♔: play checks on squares adjacent to the diagonal leading to the ♖.

81.♕a8+ ♔e5 82.♕e8+ ♔d6 83.♔c4 ♖b7 84.♕g6+ ♔c7 85.♔c5 ♔b8 86.♕e4 ♔c7 87.♕f3 ♖b1

87...♔b8 88.♔c6 ♖c7+ 89.♔b6+-

88.♕f4+ ♔d8 89.♕g5+ ♔c7 90.♕e5+

90.♕e5+ ♔ to the 8th loses the ♖ to ♕h8+ and ♕h7+.

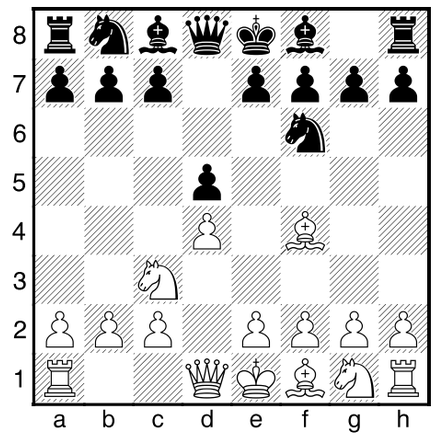
1-0

Jobava Attack

Georgia's **Baadur Jobava** won the gold medal on board 1, scoring 8/10 with a 2926 TPR. Here is his most spectacular win, coming from his own harmless-looking pet opening.

Jobava,Baadur (2665)
Ponomariov,Ruslan (2709)
B13
Baku ol (Men) 42nd Baku (8.1), 10.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♗f4



The Jobava System (?)
It's a Veresov with ♗f4 instead of ♗g5. One point is that the crude ♘b5 can leave Black's pieces misplaced after responding to the attack on c7.

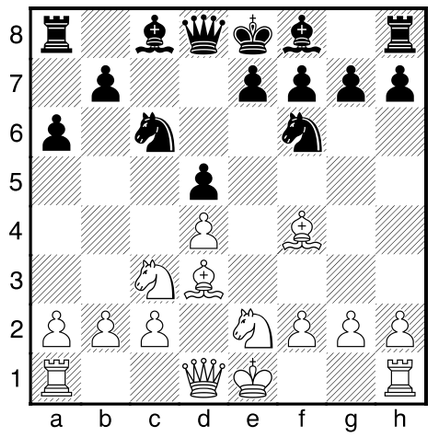
3...c5
Jobava's round 4 game at the Baku Olympiad against a former FIDE World Champion continued: ***3...e6*** 4.♘b5 *(4.e3 ♗b4 5.♘ge2 0-0 6.a3 ♗d6 7.g3 b6 8.♗g2 ♗b7=* Jobava,B−Caruana,F Wijk aan Zee, 2015.*)* 4...♘a6 *(4...♗b4+ 5.c3 ♗a5 6.a4 a6 7.b4∞* (1-0, 48) Jobava,B−Gelfand,B Almaty, 2016.*)* 5.a3 c6 6.♘c3 ♗d6 7.e3 ♘c7 8.♘f3 ♗xf4

9.exf4 ♕d6 10.♘e5 b6 11.♕f3 c5 12.♘b5 ♘xb5 13.♗xb5+ ♗d7 14.♘xd7 ♘xd7 15.0-0-0 0-0 16.♗xd7 ♕xd7 17.f5!↑ White had some pressure on Black's center pawns, and eventually won, Jobava,B−Topalov,V Baku, 2016 (1-0, 42).

4.e3 cxd4 5.exd4 a6

5...e6?! 6.♘b5! Again, this move. 6...♘a6 7.c3 ♗e7 8.♘f3 0-0 9.♗d3 *(9.h3±)* 9...♗d7 10.a4 ♗xb5 11.axb5! ♘c7 12.0-0 ♗d6 13.♘e5 ♘e4 14.f3± White has the Bishop pair and Black's ♘s have nowhere to go; (1-0, 61) Jobava,B−Kovalenko,I Almaty (blitz), 2016.

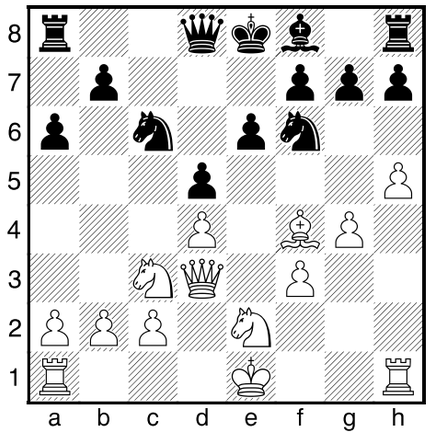
6.♗d3 ♘c6 7.♘ge2



7...e6

7...♗g4 8.f3 ♗h5 9.h4 e6 10.g4 ♗g6 11.h5 ♗xd3 12.♕xd3:

Analysis Diagram

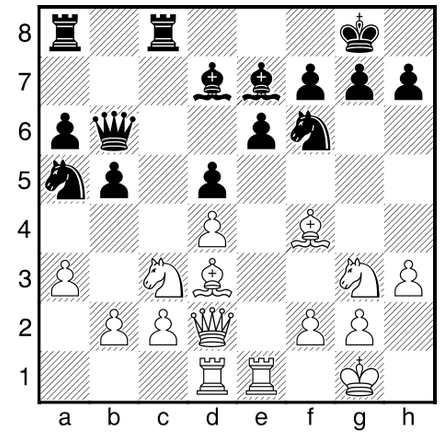


The position resembles a Caro−Kann. Jobava has had this position three times against very strong GMs, though two of the games were blitz:

12...♗d6 13.0-0-0 ♕c7 14.♕e3 h6 15.♔b1 0-0-0 16.♗xd6 ♕xd6± White has more space and it will take Black time to create play on the c−file. 17.♘c1 ♔b8 18.♘d3 ♘d7 19.♘e2 ♔a8 20.f4 f6 21.g5 ♘b6 22.b3 ♘d7 23.gxf6 ♘xf6 24.♘e5 ♖c8 25.♘f7 ♕a3□ 26.♘xh8?? ♘b4 27.♘c3 ♘e4 0-1 Jobava,B−Nepomniachtchi,I Almaty (blitz), 2016.

12...h6 13.0-0-0 ♖c8 14.♔b1 b5 *(14...♗e7 15.♗c1 ♕a5 16.♕e3 b5⇄* Jobava,B−Grischuk,A Almaty (blitz), 2016*.)* 15.♘c1 ♘a5 16.b3?! ♘c6 *(16...♕b6!?* Δ...♘c4*)* 17.♕e3 ♘b4 18.♖d2 ♗e7 19.♘3e2 ♕b6 20.c3 ♘c6 21.♘d3∞ Jobava,B−Mchedlishvili,M Izmir, 2016 (½-½, 58).

8.♕d2 b5 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.a3 ♗d7 11.h3 0-0 12.♖fe1 ♘a5 13.♖ad1 ♕b6 14.♘g3 ♖fc8



Natural and ambitious, but Jobava refutes it. ⌓14...♖fe8.

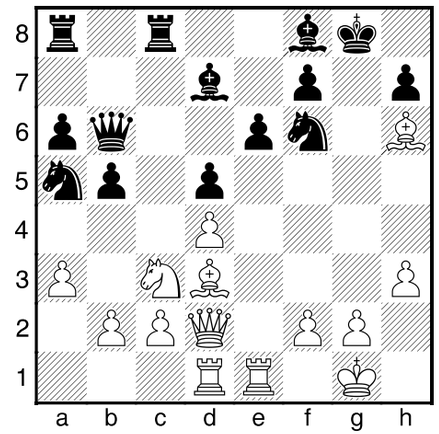
15.♘f5!

The beginning of a model attack. White has four pieces which are ready to attack the dark squares around Black's ♔ (♘f5, ♗f4, ♕, and the ♖(s) which can lift to the g−file). Black has only two pieces (♗e7 and ♙g7) defending the dark squares around his ♔, so White sacrifices to eliminate both. A key point in many lines is the poor placement of the Black ♕, which not only doesn't help defend along the sixth rank, but is actually exposed to attack across it.

15...exf5

15...♗f8 16.♘h6+!! gxh6 17.♗xh6

Analysis Diagram



Black can't defend his dark squares:

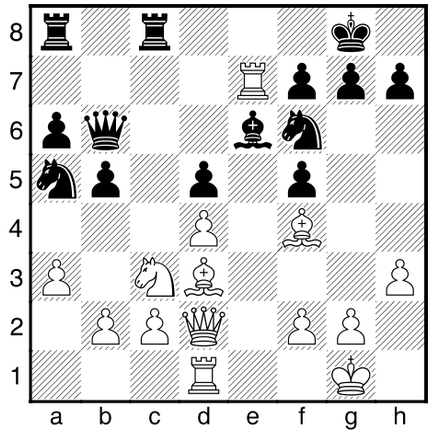
17...♗xh6 18.♕xh6 ♖xc3 19.♖e5+-;

17...♘e4 18.♘xe4 dxe4 19.♕g5+ ♔h8 20.♗xf8 ♖xf8 21.♕f6+ ♔g8 22.♖xe4+-;

17...♘h5 18.♗xf8□ ♔xf8 19.♕h6+ ♘g7 20.♘xd5! ♕c6 21.♘f6+-;

17...♕d8 18.♕g5+ ♔h8 19.♗xf8 ♕xf8 20.♕xf6++- White's up a pawn with an attack.

16.♖xe7 ♗e6?!



Black plays to trap the ♖e7.

⌓***16...♕d8 17.♖e5±*** White might have to give up the ♗ pair, but Black will remain weak on the dark squares; e.g.:
17...♘c4? 18.♗xc4 dxc4 19.♗g5±;
17...♘e4 18.♕e1 *(18.♗xe4 dxe4 19.♖c5±)* 18...♘xc3 19.bxc3 ♗e6 20.♖xe6!↑

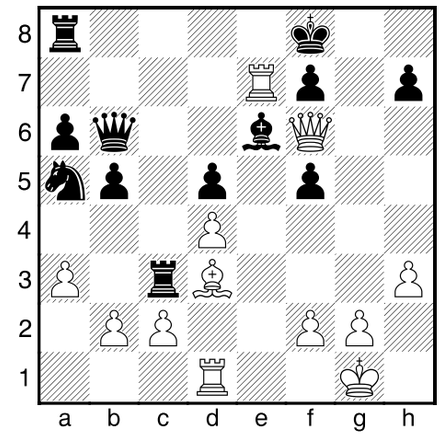
17.♗h6!!

Just like Alekhine, who frequently conjured attacks by putting pieces on squares where they could be taken by pawns only at the cost of fatally weakening the squares around them; e.g. 23.♗f6!! in Alekhine−Sterk (1921), which also exploited an undefended black ♕ on the other side of the board.

17...gxh6

17...♕d8 18.♗xg7□ ♕xe7 19.♕g5+-;
17...♘e8 18.♕g5 g6 19.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 20.♕f6+- Black can't defend his dark squares;
17...♘h5! 18.♕g5 g6? *(18...♘c6! 19.♖xe6 fxe6 20.♗e2!→)* 19.g4 fxg4 20.hxg4 f6 *(20...♘g7 21.♕f6+-* Black can't defend his dark squares.*)* 21.♕h4 and takes on h5 next. *(21.♘xd5+-* also wins*)*

18.♕xh6 ♖xc3 19.♕g5+ ♔f8 20.♕xf6



20...♖xd3

20...♖c7 21.♗xf5! ♖xe7 22.♕h8#.

21.cxd3

21.cxd3 ♖b8 22.♖e1 there's no defence to ♖1xe6.
21.cxd3 ♕d8 22.♖e1! ♕xe7 23.♕h8#.

1-0

Kramnik: KID Killer

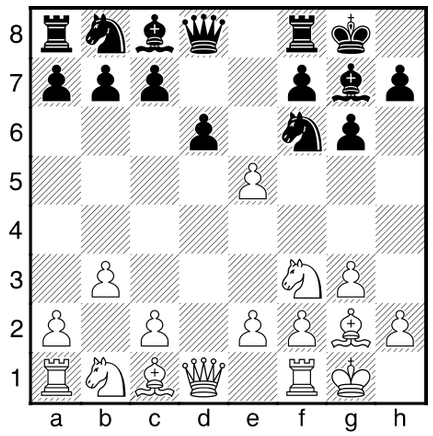
Vladimir Kramnik won the gold for best performance on board 2. Here he squashes a good GM with inventive play and sustained pressure.

This is a scary game for KID players. Kramnik plays a non-theoretical line where Black is supposed to be OK. Black plays perfectly natural moves, when Kramnik suddenly gives up two minors for a & and pawn! He later gives an exchange for a pawn, and Black's pieces have so little space that they can't stop White from promoting his queenside passers. It's almost enough to make you think Black shouldn't concede so much space by playing the KID.

Board 2 medalists ***Vladimir Kramnik*** *(Russia)* ***and*** ***Jorge Cori*** *(Peru)* may have to wait 'til the next Olympiad to meet Anton Kovalyov.

Kramnik, Vladimir (2808)
Vocaturo, Daniele (2583)
A49
42nd Olympiad Baku (11.1), 13.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.0-0 d6 6.b3 e5 7.dxe5



7...dxe5
7...♘fd7?! Used to be considered good enough to equalize, but White gets an advantage with precise play: 8.♗g5! ♕e8 9.♘c3 h6 10.♘d5 hxg5 11.♘xc7 ♕d8 12.♕xd6! g4 13.e6□ ♘a6 14.♘xa8 gxf3 15.e7! ♕a5 16.exf8♕+ ♗xf8 17.♕f4 fxg2 18.♔xg2 *(⌓18.♖fd1!*± SF8*)* "and Black is busted."

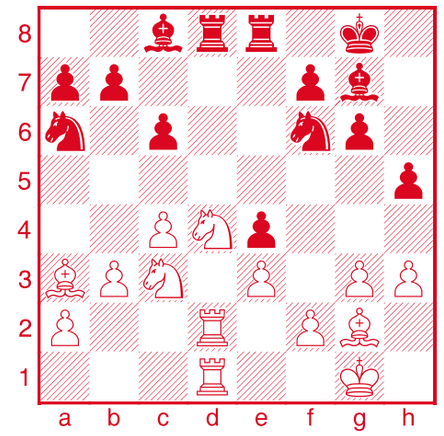
− Dembo, *Fighting the Anti−King's Indians* (Everyman, 2008).

8.♗a3
8.♗b2 e4 9.♕xd8 ♖xd8 10.♘g5 ♗f5∓ (0-1, 58) Fuster,G−Gligoric,S Portoroz, 1958.

8.♘xe5!? looks nuts, but after 8...♘g4 9.♘xg4 ♗xa1 10.♘e3 Stockfish 8 rates the position 0.00. For example: 10...♕xd1 11.♖xd1 ♗f6 12.♘d5 ♗d8 13.♗g5!⩱.

8...♕xd1 9.♖xd1 ♖e8 10.c4
10.♘c3 a6 11.e4 ♘c6 12.♘d5 ♘xd5! 13.exd5 e4 14.dxc6 ♗xa1 15.♘g5 ♗g7 16.♗xe4 bxc6? *(⌓16...b5∞)* 17.♗xc6 ♗g4 18.f3 ♗f5 19.♗xa8 ♖xa8 20.♘e4± (1-0, 31) Kramnik,V−Vovk,Y (2617) Berlin (blitz), 2015.

10...e4 11.♘d4 c6 12.♘c3 ♘a6 13.e3 ♗g4 14.♖d2 ♖ad8 15.h3 ♗c8 16.♖ad1 h5



White's pieces are as well placed as they're going to get, but how can he turn that into something when Black is so solid?

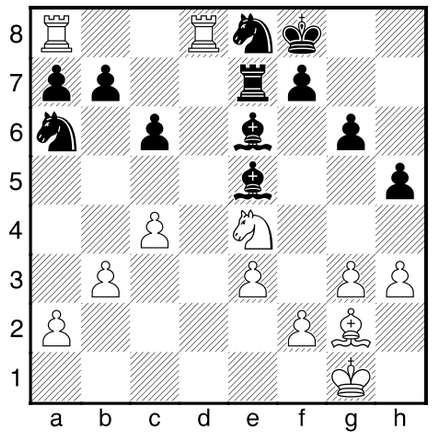
17.♗e7!?
Threatening the ♖d8 and to take on f6 then on e4, so Black's next is forced.

17...♖xd4!
17...♖xe7? 18.♘xc6+- with the intermediate check on e7.

18.♖xd4 ♖xe7 19.♖d8+ ♘e8
It's hard to know if trading a pair of ♖s helps Black, but in the game, Black's ♖ doesn't get a whiff of activity. 19...♖e8 20.♖xe8+ ♘xe8 21.♖d8 ♔f8 22.♘xe4 ♗e6 23.♘d6 ♔e7 24.♘xb7 is also better for White.

20.♘xe4
20.♖xc8? ♗xc3∓.

20...♗e6 21.♖a8 ♗e5 22.♖dd8 ♔f8



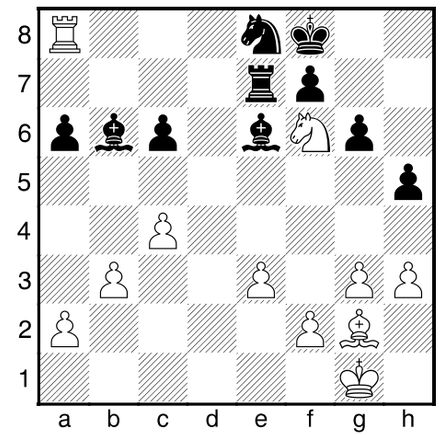
23.♖xa7

One line, not forced, which shows Black's difficulties: 23.♘g5 ♗c7 24.♘xe6+ fxe6 25.♖dc8 ♗b6 26.♗e4 ♘ac7 27.♗xg6 ♘xa8 28.♖xa8 and Black can't get out of the pin on the ♘.

23...♗c7 24.♖da8!

24.♖d2 ♗b8 and White will have to give the exchange when his second ♖ is less active on d2.

24...♗b6 25.♖xa6 bxa6 26.♘f6



White has given back the exchange to win a pawn, and now has two pawns for the ♗, but he also has a terrible bind on Black. Right now he threatens ♗xc6, winning the ♘e8.

26...♗d7 27.b4 c5 28.♘d5 ♗c6

28...♖e6 29.♖b8 ♗a7 30.♖b7+-.

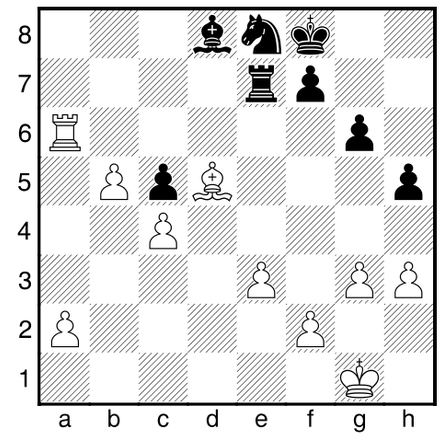
29.♖xa6!

29.♘xb6? ♗xa8 30.♗xa8 cxb4-+.

29...♗xd5□ 30.♗xd5

30.cxd5? ♗a7 31.b5 ♗b8 and Black might survive.

30...♗d8 31.b5!



Black's pieces are as nimble as overfed Pandas.

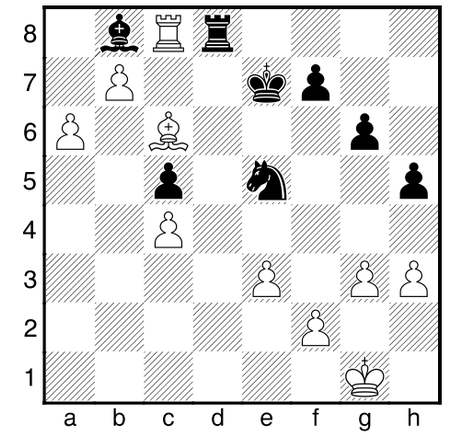
31...♖d7

31...♘c7 32.♖d6□ ♖e8 *(32...♔e8? 33.♗c6++-)* 33.♗c6 ♗e7 34.♖d7 ♖c8 *(34...♘e6 35.a4+-; 34...♘a8 35.♖a7+-)* 35.♗b7+-.

32.b6 ♔e7 33.b7 ♗c7 34.♖a8 ♘f6 35.♖c8!

35.b8♕?? ♗xb8 36.♖xb8 ♘xd5±.

35...♗d6 36.♗c6! ♖d8 37.a4 ♘d7 38.a5 ♗b8 39.a6 ♘e5



40.♖xb8! ♖xb8 41.♗d5

1-0

Swedish Royal Family?

GM Juan Bellon Lopez was Captain of the Swedish Women's team, his wife **GM Pia Cramling** (*right*) won bronze on board 1, and their daughter **Anna** (*left*) played board 5.

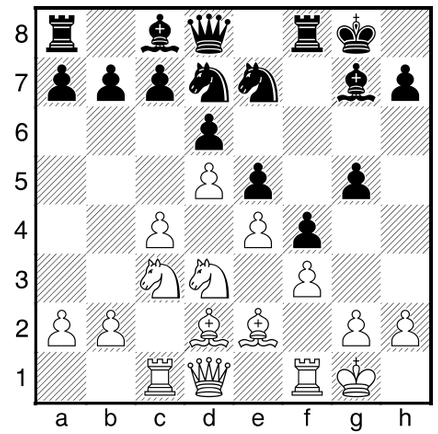
Raggar vs KID

Markus Raggar is an Austrain GM. This entertaining attacking game shows off his skills against the KID, sacing material on the queenside for piece activity in the center before winning with a double promotion combo.

I've included quite a few of his previous games in the notes, just to suggest that a brilliancy like this is based on a lot of practice and even a lot of failure.

Ragger, Markus (2697)
Maze, Sebastien (2617)
E99
42nd Olympiad Baku (7.1), 09.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

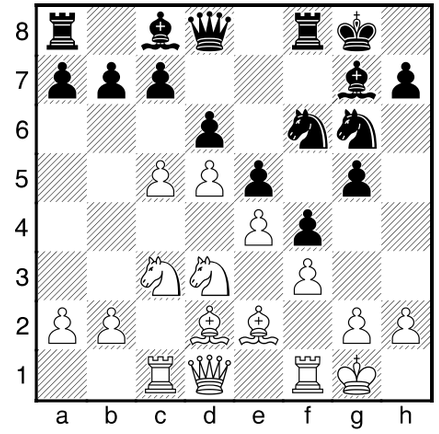
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1 ♘d7 10.♘d3 f5 11.f3 f4 12.♗d2 g5 13.♖c1



Raggar is the highest−rated player to regularly go for this position as White. Although the ♗d2 is less actively placed for queenside pressure than it would be on f2, White can play ♘f2 and h3 to have 5 pieces placed to stop Black's thematic ...g4. But, as we see in the main game and the examples embedded in the notes, Raggar does not play this line to defend the kingside, but to attack the queenside, often by sacrificing a pawn or a piece for two pawns.

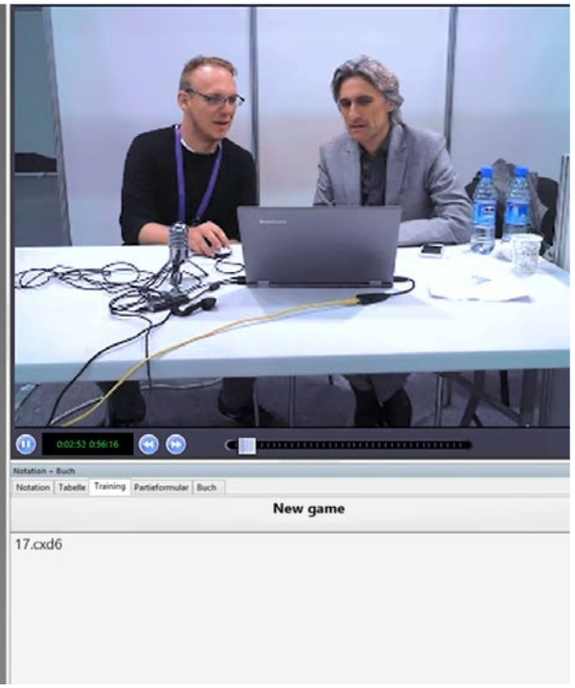
13...♘g6
13...♖f7 a standard KID move: defending the 7th rank and preparing ...♗f8 and ...♖g7. 14.c5 ♘xc5 15.♘xc5 dxc5 16.♘a4 b6 17.b4! A standard KID sacrifice to accelerate White's queenside play. 17...cxb4 18.♗xb4 ♔h8 19.♕b3⩲ (1-0, 30) Ragger,M−Savenkov,K (2325) Minsk, 2015.

14.c5 ♘f6
14...dxc5 15.b4!? cxb4 16.♘b5↑ is a common KID sac for White to accelerate queenside play.



15.♘b5
15.cxd6 cxd6 16.♘b5 ♖f7 17.♕c2 ♘e8 18.a4 h5 19.♘f2 is a common line; see Ivanchuk,V−Cheparinov,I Sofia, 2008.

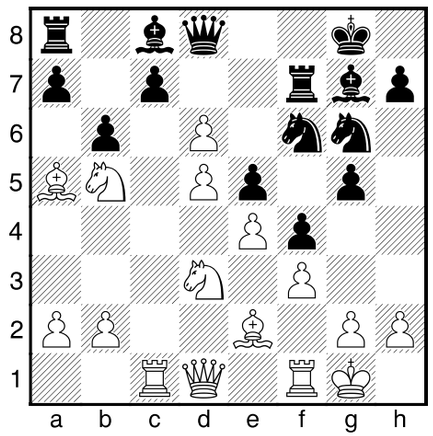
Raggar promotes to King



15...♖f7

In this game Raggar sacs a piece for two passed centre pawns: 15...a6 16.cxd6 axb5 17.dxc7 ♕e8 18.♕b3 g4 19.♘c5 ♘h4 20.fxg4± ♘xg4? 21.♗e1± *(⌓21.d6+! ♔h8 22.♕h3+-)* 21...♘xg2 22.♔xg2 b6 *(22...♘e3+ 23.♔h1 ♘xf1 24.d6+ ♔h8 25.♗xf1+-)* 23.♘e6 ♘e3+ 24.♔h1 ♕g6 25.♖f2□ ♖e8 26.♗f3+- (1-0, 32) Ragger,M−Al Sayed,M (2505) Dubai World Rapid Ch., 2014.

16.♗a5 b6 17.cxd6



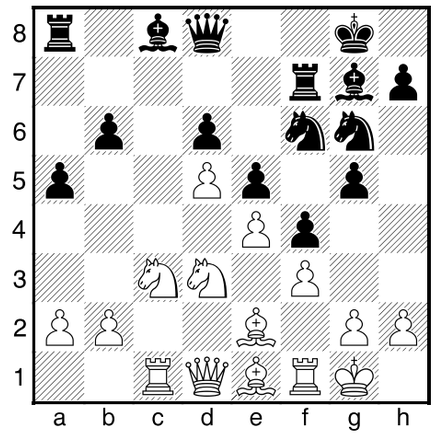
17...cxd6

17...bxa5?! 18.dxc7 ♕f8 19.♘c5! a6 20.♘e6± with an exciting position that is much more fun to play as White.

18.♗e1 g4

18...a6 19.♘c3 a5:

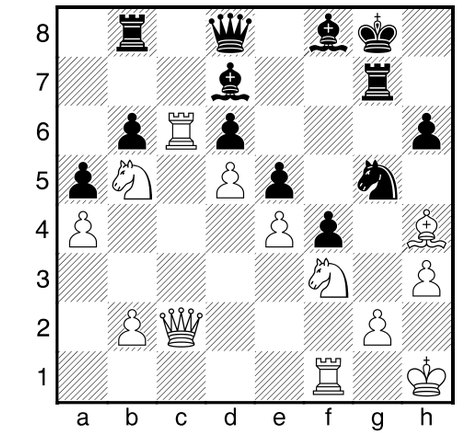
Analysis Diagram



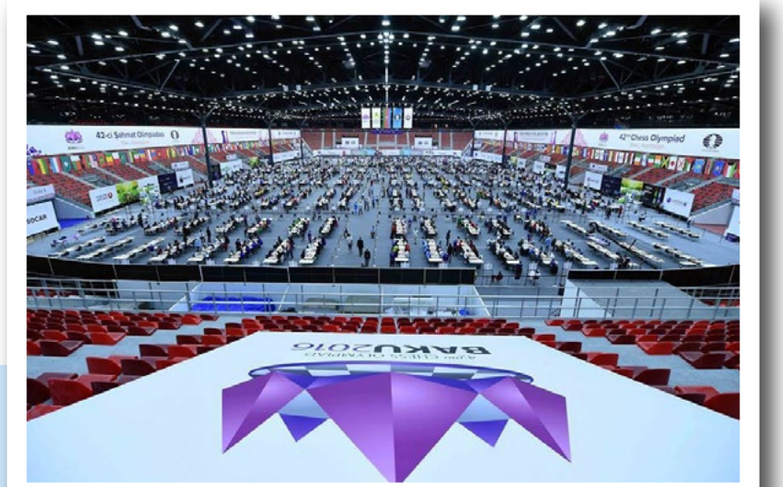
20.♘f2 ♗f8 21.♘b5 h5 22.♘h3!? *(22.h3* looks normal.*)* 22...♘e8 23.♔h1 ♖g7 24.♖c3 ♗d7 25.a4 ♘h8 another typical maneuver: rerouting the ♘ to support ...g4. 26.♘f2 ♘f7 27.h3 ♘h6∞ Ragger,M−Szabo,K (2545) Haguenau, 2013.

20.♗f2 ♖b8 21.a4 ♗f8 22.♘b5 g4 23.♖c6 ♖g7 24.♕c2 ♗d7 25.fxg4 ♘xg4 26.♗xg4 ♗xg4 27.♘e1 ♘h8 28.♔h1 ♘f7 29.h3 ♗d7 30.♘f3 ♘g5 31.♗h4 h6:

Analysis Diagram

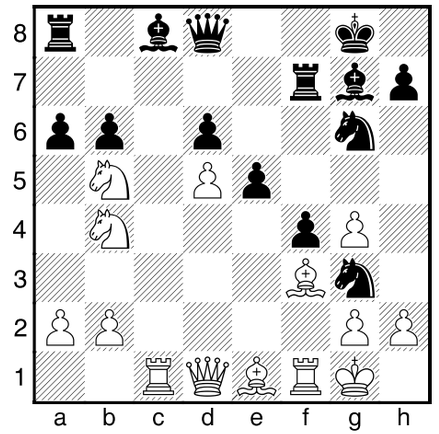


32.♘xd6 ♗xc6 33.♘f5□ ♗e8 Asking White to prove it. *(33...♗xd5!?; 33...♖c7=)* 34.♘xh6+ ♔h8 35.♘f5 ♖c8 36.♕d3 White has only two pawns for the ♖, but can get an exchange back on g5. 36...♖g8 37.♘xe5 ♕f6 38.♘f3 *(38.♗f2! ♗c5 39.♗d4 ♗xd4 40.♘g4→)* 38...♗d7 39.♕d2? ♗xf5 40.♕xf4 ♗h6 41.exf5 ♖cd8= (0-1, 59) Ragger,M−Grischuk,A (2774) Skopje, 2015.



It looks so easy from way up here

19.fxg4 ♘xe4 20.♘b4 a6 21.♗f3 ♘g3!



It would be easy to get boggled if you're just seeing a position like this for the first time. For Raggar, it was the second time he had this position OTB in 2016.

22.♘c6N

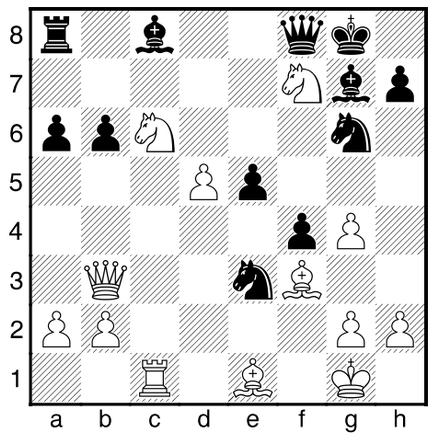
22.♘xd6 ♕xd6 23.♖c6 ♕f8 *(23...♕d8 24.hxg3 a5 25.♘d3 ♗b7±)* 24.hxg3 fxg3 25.d6! e4 26.♗e2 ♖xf1+ 27.♗xf1 ♗xg4 28.♕d5+ *(28.♕xg4?? ♗d4+-+)*

28...♔h8 29.♖c7 ♗e6 30.♕xe4 ♗f5 31.♕d5 ♗e4 32.♕d2 *(32.♕xe4? ♖e8∓)* 32...♗e5 33.♖c4 ♗b7 34.d7 ♖d8 35.♘c6 ♗xc6 36.♖xc6 ♕f5 37.♖c8 ♖xc8 38.♕d3!? ♕f8 39.dxc8♕ ♕xc8 ½-½ Ragger,M−Nakamura,H (2787) Gibraltar, 2016.

22...♕f8=

22...♕g5?? 23.♘xd6+-.

23.♘xd6 ♘xf1 24.♘xf7 ♘e3 25.♕b3



25...♔xf7□

25...♕xf7 26.♘d8+-.

26.h4 e4?!

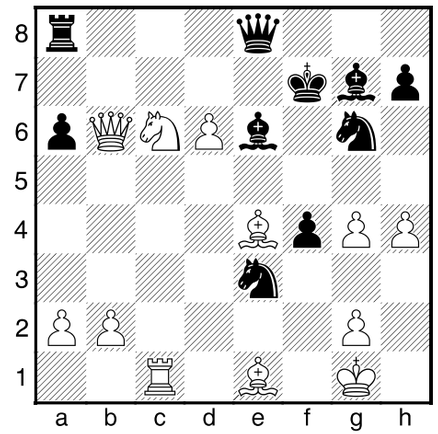
Totally reasonable — giving up the pawn to activate the minors — but not necessary.

⌓26...♕e8=.

27.♗xe4 ♕e8 28.d6+ ♗e6

28...♔f8?? 29.d7 ♗xd7 30.♗b4++-.

29.♕xb6



White has three pawns for the piece, but the lack of structure and exposed ♔s make this all about tactics.

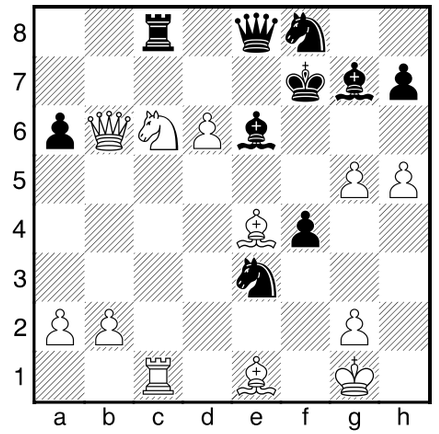
29...♖c8

29...♗xa2? 30.♕b7+ ♔g8 31.d7 ♕xe4 threatening mate on g2 32.♕xa8+ ♗f8 *(32...♔f7 33.d8♘+!* and Black gets mated.*)* 33.♘e7+□ ♕xe7 34.d8♕+-.

30.h5↑

30.♕xa6? ♗d7 31.♕b7 ♔f8∓.

30...♘f8 31.g5!



Black has three pieces controlling d7, so it's a bit surprising that White's d−pawn will promote.

31...♘d7

⌓31...♗d7 attacking e4 and c6 takes some pressure off h7. 32.♕b3+ *(32.♗f3!?±)* 32...♕e6 33.g6+ hxg6 34.hxg6+ ♔e8□ *(34...♘xg6?? 35.♗xg6+ ♔xg6 36.♕xe6+ ♗xe6 37.♘e7++-)* 35.♗c3∞.

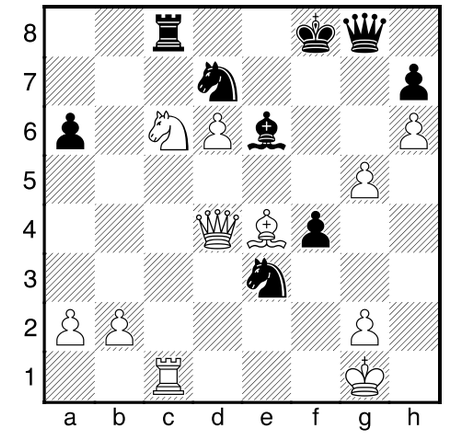
32.♕b4± ♔f8?

32...♗f5 33.♕b3+ ♗e6 *(33...♕e6? 34.g6++-)* 34.♕d3.

33.h6 ♗h8 34.♗c3!

eliminating a defender of the weakened dark squares around Black's ♔.

34...♗xc3 35.♕xc3 ♕f7 36.♕d4+- ♕g8



37.♖c5!

Defends g5 and prepares to consolidate with b2-b4. 37.♖c3! Δ♕xg5 38.♕h8+ ♕g8 39.♘e7!!+-.

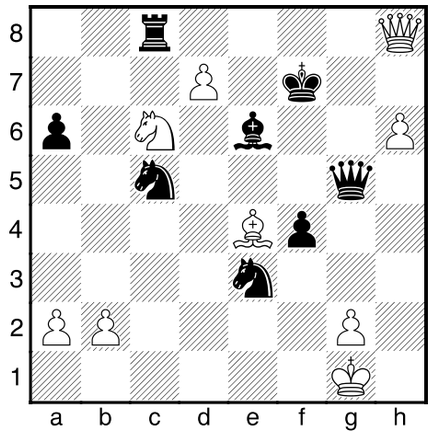
37...♘xc5 38.d7! ♕xg5

38...♗xd7 39.♕d6+ ♔f7 40.♕e7#.

39.♕h8+! ♔f7

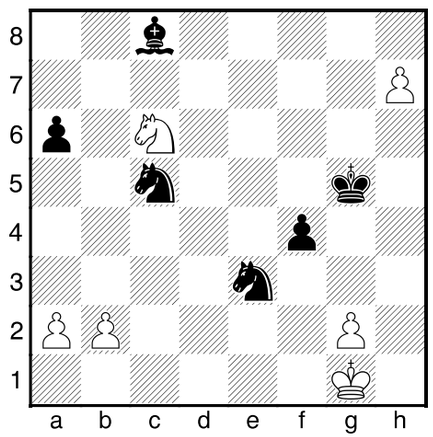
39...♕g8 40.♕f6+ ♕f7 41.dxc8♕+ ♗xc8 42.♕d6++-.

40.♕xh7+ ♔f8 41.♕h8+ ♔f7



42.♗g6+
Fancy.
White also wins with the prosaic: 42.♘e5+ ♕xe5 43.dxc8♕.

42...♔xg6 43.♕g7+ ♔h5 44.♕xg5+ ♔xg5 45.dxc8♕ ♗xc8 46.h7



46...♗b7 47.♘d4 ♗xg2 48.h8♕ ♘e4 49.♕e5+ 1-0

Caruana's Close Call

Teams play 44 games in the Olympiad. It should be no surprise that a few of those games were close to having different results; and if they had, then those matches and tie-breaks would have been different.

As we saw earlier, in the final round against Canada, Wesley So was a move away from a loss and (later) a move away from a draw, either of which would have cost the USA the gold medal. Here was an earlier close call...

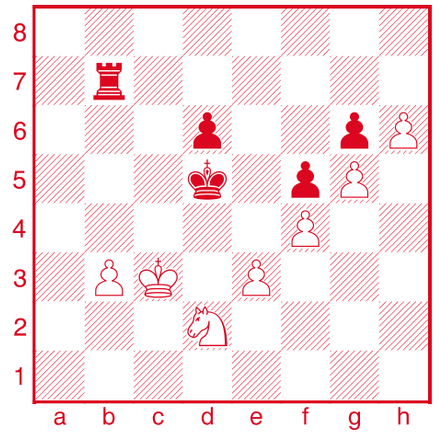
Fabiano Caruana played his first Olympiad for the USA, and he left with two medals: Gold for the top Team, and Bronze on board 3 (7/10; 2838 TPR).

Both of those would have been different if his opponent found a study-like win in the following game.

Shh. Be very quiet....

The guy on the right doesn't know he will have a chance at a famous brilliancy.

Ivanisevic, Ivan (2650)
Caruana, Fabiano (2808)
A40
42nd Olympiad Baku (5.1), 06.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

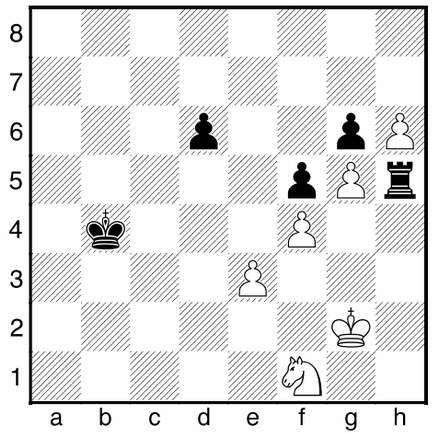


What happens after 52...♖c7+ 53.♘c4?

52...♖c7+ 53.♘c4 ♖b7??
53...♔e4?? 54.♔d2 d5 55.♘d6+ ♔f3 56.♔d3+-.
53...♖c8! 54.♔d3 ♖b8 and Black should hold the draw.

54.♘d2?
54.e4+!!+- wins. The point is to create two passers on th 6th: 54...fxe4 55.f5 gxf5 56.g6+-.

54...♖c7+ 55.♔d3 ♖c1 56.b4 ♖d1 57.♔e2 ♖h1 58.♘f1 ♔c4 59.♔f2 ♔xb4 60.♔g2 ♖h5



61.♘h2?
61.♘g3! ♖h4 and the ♖ can't be caught, but 62.e4!! wins again: 62...fxe4 63.f5 gxf5 64.♘xf5+-.

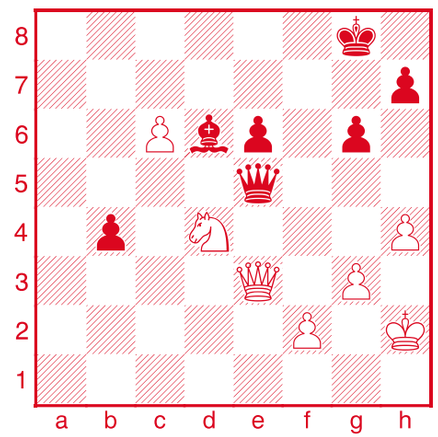
61...♔c5 62.♘f3 ♔d5 63.♔g3 ♔e6 64.♘d4+
64.♘h4 ♔f7 and the King gets back just in time.

64...♔f7 65.♘b5 ♔e7 66.♔g2 ♖h4 67.♘c7 ♔f7 68.♘d5 ♖g4+ 69.♔f3 ♖g1 70.♔e2 ♖a1 71.♘c3 ♖a5 72.♔d3 ♖c5 73.♔d4 ♖a5 74.♔c4 ½-½

China v Russia

In 2014, the Russian women took the gold after beating the Chinese in their individual match. This year, the China-Russia showdown came in the final round, and this time the result was different.... because of this game.

Tan, Zhongyi (2475)
Goryachkina, Aleksandra (2475)
E01
Women's Olympiad Baku (11.3), 13.09.2016
Notes by John Upper



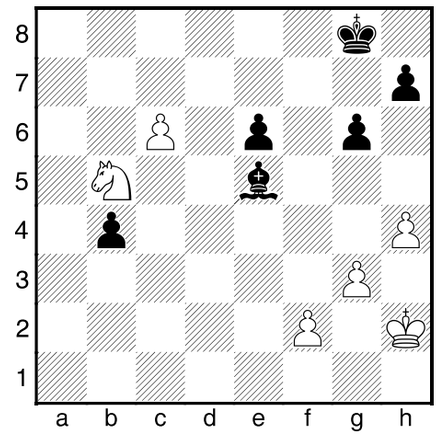
Black has just pushed her passed pawn with ...b4. What should White play?

46.♘b5□+-
46.♕xe5? ♗xe5 47.♔g2! and White has to play accurately to hold.

46...♕xb5
46...♕xe3 47.fxe3 Black is faster in the pawn race, but White promotes with check:
47...b3 48.♘xd6 b2 49.c7 b1♕ 50.c8♕+ ♔g7 51.♕c7++- Black gets mated.

47...♗e5 48.c7 ♗xc7 49.♘xc7 ♔f7 *(49...b3 50.♘b5□+-* and ♘a3 stops the pawn.*)* 50.♘b5 e5 51.♘d6+! ♔e6 52.♘c4 ♔d5 53.♘d2□+- without ♕xe3 and fxe3, the Black ♔ could now dislodge the blockading ♘ with ...♔d4-d3.

46...♗b8! looks like it might simply lose a tempo, but it sets up an amazing drawing idea which White has to play very accurately to defeat. 47.♕xe5 ♗xe5 *Analysis Diagram*



48.c7? ♗xc7 49.♘xc7 ♔f7 50.♘*b5 (50.♔g2 ♔e7 51.♘b5 e5! now the ♘ has no way back and Black threatens to win it. 52.♔f3 ♔d7 53.♔e4 ♔c6 54.♘a7+ ♔b7=)* 50...e5 51.♘c7!! b3 52.♘b5 ♔e6 53.♘c3 ♔d6 *(53...b2? makes it too easy, 54.♔g2 e4 55.♔f1 ♔e5*

***Zhongyi Tan**, about to make history.*

56.♔e2 ♔d4 57.♘b1+-) 54.♔g2 ♔c5 55.♔f3 ♔c4 56.♘e4□ *(56.♘b1 ♔d3=)* 56...b2 57.♔e3□ *(57.♘d2+? ♔d3=)* 57...b1♘!? and White has more active pieces, but it's not clear (to me) if it's a win. Maybe readers can find a solution?

Instead, from the *Analysis Diagram*, White wins with ***48.f4!!+-*** gaining a tempo on the ♗ and preventing Black from fencing in the horse with ...e5 as in the variations above.

47.♕xe6+
The ♕ ending is hopeless: White's passer is much further advanced and the black ♔ is exposed.

47...♔g7 48.♕xd6 ♕b6 49.♔g2 b3 50.♕e7+ ♔g8 51.♕b7! 1-0

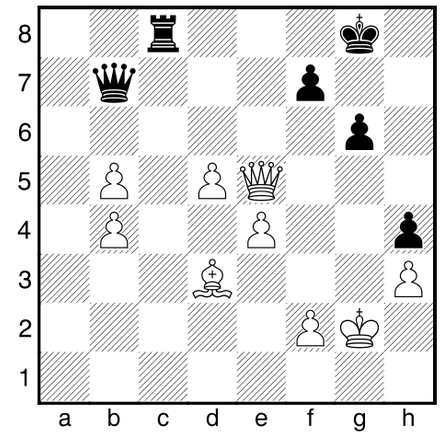
The unofficial gold medal game

Because the Olympiad tie-breaks are not the result of head-to-head matches, but Sonnen-Berger, the gold and silver medals were undecided until the end of this game... *even though neither of these teams was eligible for any medal*. **If Black could draw, then Ukraine would take the gold on tie-break; if White won, then the USA would.**

Bluebaum, Matthias (2626)
Seeman, Tarvo (2407)
E90
42nd Olympiad Baku (11.3), 13.09.2016
Notes by John Upper

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.h3 0-0 6.♗e3 e5 7.d5 ♘a6 8.♘f3 ♗d7 9.g4 c6 10.♘d2 cxd5 11.cxd5 ♕b8 12.a3 ♖c8 13.♗e2 ♘c5 14.a4 ♖c7 15.♔f1 ♕d8 16.♔g2 ♘e8 17.♘b5 ♖cc8 18.b4 ♗xb5 19.axb5!? ♘d7 20.♖a3 ♗f6 21.♘f3 ♗e7 22.♗d3 ♘g7 23.♕e2 h5 24.g5 h4
It may not look like much, but this pawn is key to the game ending tactics.

25.♖ha1 ♘h5 26.♖xa7 ♖ab8 27.♕d2 ♘f4+ 28.♗xf4 exf4 29.♕xf4 ♘e5 30.♘xe5 dxe5 31.♕xe5 ♗xg5 32.♖1a2 ♗f6 33.♕f4 ♕e7 34.♖c2 ♗e5 35.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 36.♖xb7 ♕xb7 37.♕xe5



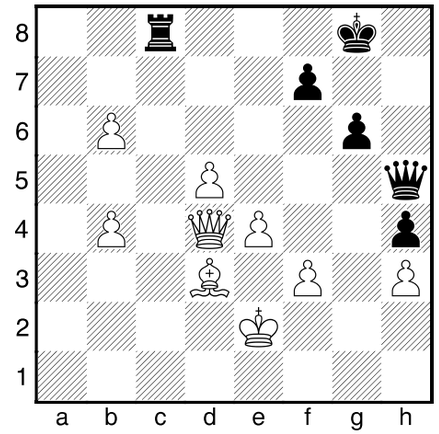
37...♕b6□
Stopping d5-d6.

38.♕b2
38.d6 now drops the d−pawn to 38...♖d8 39.d7 ♕e6.

38...♕d6 39.♕d4 ♕f4?
Black has to stop e5, and tries it with piece activity. ⌓39...f6 buttressing the dark squares.

40.b6! ♕g5+
The players have reached the time control, but this is the last of 11 rounds, and fatigue tells.

41.♔f3 ♕h5+ 42.♔g2 ♕g5+ 43.♔f3 ♕h5+ 44.♔e3+- ♕g5+ 45.♔e2 ♕h5+ 46.f3



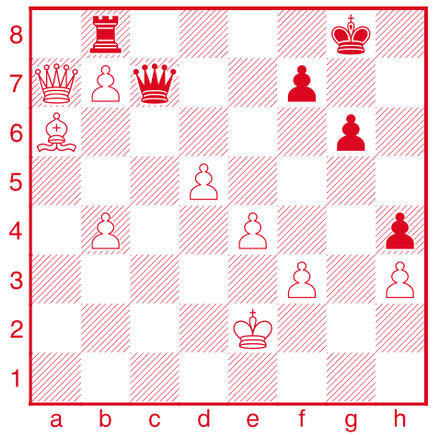
46...♕g5
46...♖b8 47.d6+-.

47.b7
47.d6? ♕g2+□ 48.♕f2□ ♕xh3 49.e5∞.

***Chinese Women**, first Olympiad gold after several Women's World Championships.*

47...♖b8 48.♕a7?
⌓48.♕c5 ♕d8 49.♗a6+-.

48...♕g2+ 49.♔e1 ♕g3+ 50.♔d2 ♕f4+ 51.♔e2 ♕c7! 52.♗a6



If Black draws then Ukraine gets the gold medal. If White wins then the USA gets the gold medal.

52...♕c2+! 53.♔e3 ♕c1+?
53...♕c3+!=:

a) 54.♗d3?? ♕e1+ 55.♔f4 ♕g3+ 56.♔e3 ♕g1+-+;

b) 54.♔f4?? g5+□-+ 55.♔xg5 ♕e5+□ 56.♔xh4 ♕f4+ 57.♔h5 ♕xf3+ 58.♔h6 *(58.♔g5 f6+□-+)* 58...♕f4+ 59.♔h5 ♔h7-+;

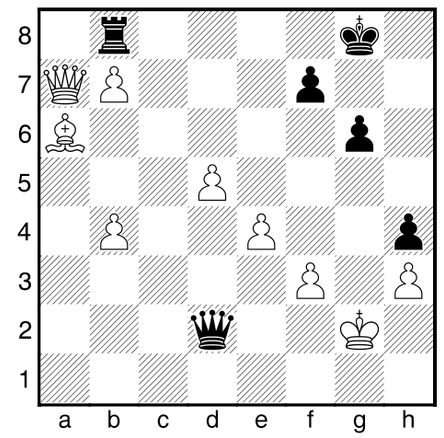
c) 54.♔f2 ♕b2+! 55.♔g1 (55.♗e2 ♕e5 56.♔e3 ♕c3+ 57.♔f2 *(57.♗d3?? ♕e1+* and ...♕g1+ skewers the ♕.*)*) 55...♕a1+! Checks from the a−file prevent White from blocking checks with the ♕ or ♗. 56.♔g2 ♕a2+=.

54.♔f2?
54.♔d3!+-.
54.♔d4?? ♕g1+-+.

54...♕c2+!
54...♕d2+?! 55.♗e2 ♕f4 56.♕c5 and White can still press for a win.

55.♔g1
55.♗e2 ♕c7=.

55...♕c1+ 56.♔g2 ♕d2+



57.♔f1

57.♕f2 ♕g5+ *(57...♕xf2+?? 58.♔xf2 ♔f8 59.d6!+-* and the black ♔ can't cross to the queenside without allowing ♗b5+ and ♗c6, when the ♗ and pawns dominate the ♖.*)* 58.♔f1 ♕c1+ 59.♕e1 ♕a3= forking f3 and ♗a6.

57...♕c1+ 58.♔e2 ♕c2+ 59.♔e3 ♕c1+??
As above, 59...♕c3+ draws.... and Ukraine becomes 2016 Baku Olympiad gold medalists.

60.♔d3!+- ♕d1+ 61.♔c4 ♕f1+ 62.♔b3 ♕d1+ 63.♔b2 ♕d2+ 64.♔a3 ♕c3+ 65.♔a4 ♕c7 66.♕c5! ♕h2 67.♔a5 ♔g7 68.♔b6 ♕xh3 69.♕c7 ♖xb7+ 70.♗xb7 ♕xf3 71.d6 h3 72.e5
Now the ♗ covers h1...

72...♕f4
... and the USA takes the gold medal on tie−break over Ukraine.

1-0

2. Ukraine 1. USA 3.Russia

Pro Tip: *bring a flag next time.*

Chess Canada
2016 Olympiad